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THREE MODERN PLAYS FROM THE FRENCH

THE PRINCE D'AUREC By HENRI LAVEDAN

THE PARDON By JULES LEMAÎTRE

Both translated by BARRETT H. CLARK

AND

THE OTHER DANGER By MAURICE DONNAY

Translated by CHARLOTTE TENNEY DAVID

With a Preface by CLAYTON HAMILTON
Author of "Studies in Stagecraft," etc.

and

Articles on the three French Authors with bibliographies by
BARRETT H. CLARK
Author of "The Continental Drama of To-day," translator of Hervieu's "The Labyrinth," etc.

NEW YORK
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1914

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PREFACE

THE label "Made in France" may nearly always be accepted as a guarantee of good play-making; for, ever since the inception of the modern drama, the French have been the masters and the teachers of the craft. In these opening years of the twentieth century, fewer French plays have been presented in the theaters of America and England than were presented in the closing years of the nineteenth century; but this fact, instead of indicating a deterioration in the contemporary product, may be accepted, rather, as an indication that the French drama has made a definite advance along a certain line.

The dominant spirit of the French drama in the last three generations has been realistic. As realism advances, the tendency is to narrow the segment of life that is submitted to observation and to deepen the observation of the segment that has been selected for analysis. As realism has progressed in France, the drama has become more French—more local in its themes and in its characters—and has sacrificed the breadth of cosmopolitan appeal to gain the depth of national importance.

Three or four generations ago, the most popular dramatist in France was Eugène Scribe. It was this facile and prolific craftsman who gave to the modern theater the formula of the well-made play [*la pièce bien faite*], a formula that, with several modifications and amplifications, has subsisted to the present day. Since the excellence of Scribe was mainly structural, it was very easy to transplant his plays from one country to another. His dialogue was devoid of literary merit, and was therefore just as per-

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tinent in a translation as in the original. His characters were merely puppets, and were therefore just as interesting to foreigners as they could ever be to Frenchmen. And, since there was no note of nationality in his dexterous and clever plots, these plots could easily be adapted to serve as the theatric fare of a public overseas. A simple play of plot is much more cosmopolitan in its appeal than a study of national characters or local situations.

The broad and cosmopolitan appeal of Scribe was continued by his immediate disciple and successor, Victorien Sardou. A typical Sardou melodrama, like *Fédora* or *La Tosca,* was fully as enjoyable to foreign audiences as to the public of Paris. The logical successor of Sardou in the contemporary French theater is M. Henry Bernstein; and it is not surprising that his plays have been more successful in America than those of any other French playwright of the present time. No less than five of his works—*The Whirlwind, The Thief, Samson, Israel,* and *The Secret*—have been profitably acted in this country. M. Bernstein is a more important dramatist than Sardou or Scribe, for he has forced the formula of the well-made play to sustain an analysis of character that is unusually searching; but his merit is, in the main, a matter of mechanics, and his emphasis on mechanism may be accepted as accounting for the comparative ease with which his plays may be transported from one country to another.

In France itself, while Scribe was still alive, his reputation was overridden by two dramatists of more profound intention,—Emile Augier and Alexandre Dumas, *fils;* but neither of these writers attained the cosmopolitan currency of their more mechanical and artificial rival. Augier—the greatest French dramatist of the nineteenth century—devoted himself to the study of social conditions which were peculiarly French; and it was impossible to make his plays

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seem applicable to the social conditions of any other country. Just as M. Bernstein has been singled out as the logical successor of Sardou and Scribe, M. Eugène Brieux may be selected as the logical successor of Augier in the contemporary theater. The life-purpose of M. Brieux is to point out what is wrong in the social system of his own country in his own time; and many of his criticisms lose their pertinence whenever an attempt is made to apply them to the social system of any other country. Three of his plays have been acted in English in New York. Of these three, both *The Incubus* [*Les Hannetons*] and *The Three Daughters of M. Dupont* have failed, because they were directed against social conditions which have no counterpart in America; and only *Damaged Goods* [*Les Avariés*] has succeeded, because (despite the fact that it is inferior to either of the others as a technical accomplishment) it deals with a problem that is of equal moment to every nation in the modern world.

Since Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, was more interested in the analysis of individual characters than of social problems, his work, while less profound than that of Emile Augier, was more susceptible of transportation; but it is interesting to record that his best play, *Le Demi-Monde*, because it is particularly French, has never attained the currency in other countries that was easily acquired by that comparatively immature and sentimental product, *La Dame aux Camélias*, which is still acted in America under the title of *Camille*. The logical successor of the younger Dumas as an analyst of individual character is M. Paul Hervieu. Four of his plays—*The Labyrinth, The Awakening, Know Thyself*, and *The Passing of the Torch*—have been acted in America; but none of them has been successful in the theater, because they deal with subtleties of psychology which are locally and characteristically French.

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We are thus confronted with the paradox that, as the French drama has become more profoundly meritorious from the point of view of realism, it has become less susceptible of transportation to the stage of other countries like America. It was easy to adapt the plays of Scribe to the uses of the American theater; but it would be very difficult to adapt the plays of M. François de Curel or M. Alfred Capus, because these writers are more deeply and typically French. In recent years two plays by M. Henry Bataille have been presented in America—*The Foolish Virgin* and *The Scandal*—but both of these have failed, because the intensification of their realism carried with it a necessary localization in the author's attitude toward character. In proportion as realism approaches its ideal of reality, it becomes incomprehensible to a public that is not native and indued unto the element in which the realist is working.

It becomes evident, therefore, that if the plays of the finest French writers of the present day are to be made familiar to the theater-going public of America, they must be presented through the medium of publication, instead of through the medium of theatrical production. It may honestly be doubted whether a popular success would be attained if any of the *Three Modern Plays from the French* which are offered in the present volume were presented in the American theater; because all three of these plays are perhaps too local in their implications to make an immediate appeal to the casual and careless public of this country. It has therefore been deemed advisable to publish them, in order to place them in the hands of that cultured minority that is sufficiently equipped to appreciate and value an extraordinary technical accomplishment.

The three playwrights whose work is represented in the present volume have been chosen with a purpose to broaden

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the acquaintance of the public of this country with the contemporary French drama. Three plays by M. Brieux [*The Three Daughters of M. Dupont, Maternity,* and *Damaged Goods*] have already been published in America, with a preface by Mr. Bernard Shaw. A representative play by M. Hervieu [*The Labyrinth*] has been published in this country, with a preface by Mr. Barrett H. Clark, the editor of the present volume, and translator of two of the plays included in it. The work of M. Bernstein has already been adequately made familiar in America, through the medium of popular theatrical production. But the present volume offers to our reading public the very first opportunity to study the no less representative work of MM. Henri Lavedan, Jules Lemaître, and Maurice Donnay.

Three plays by M. Lavedan have already been acted in America, with varying degrees of success, and one play by M. Donnay has been presented for a few weeks in New York; but the work of the three playwrights represented in the present volume is less familiar to the American public than that of MM. Brieux, Hervieu, and Bernstein. It is hoped, therefore, that this little book may serve to extend the appreciation in this country of what is being accomplished by the leading French playwrights of the present day.

In *The Prince d'Aurec,* the main point to be noted is the skill with which M. Lavedan has created the character of a traditional aristocrat of a type for which there is no counterpart in American society. We may reasonably argue that the Prince falls short of that utilitarian ideal by which we are accustomed, in our own democracy, to measure the worth of a man; but we must admit that there is a certain innate fineness in his character that has been inherited from centuries of aristocracy. In *The Pardon,* by M. Jules Lemaître, we are called upon to admire the astounding

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technical efficiency with which the author has managed to devise a full-length play by the manipulation of only three characters. The pattern of this piece illustrates both the beauty of essential symmetry and that subtler beauty that is derived by unexpected variations from a symmetrical scheme that seems to have been anticipated in all details. *The Other Danger,* by M. Donnay, reminds us, in its craftsmanship, of the artistry of Sir Arthur Pinero. It is apparent that Pinero would have suppressed the initial and preparatory act, and would have begun the play at the moment which M. Donnay has selected for the outset of his second act; but it may be questioned whether the customary concentration of the British dramatist is preferable to the deliberate and gradual preparation of this French writer for a distressing and abhorrent climax.

A word must be appended in explanation of the moral attitude of these French writers toward those incidents of life which they have chosen to depict. In all three of these plays (and indeed in nearly all of the contemporary dramas that are "made in France") the problem of illicit love is brought up for analysis. Though our minds may be made up that illicit love is, in every imaginable circumstance, immoral, it does not logically follow that plays which present a sincere analysis of such a circumstance must therefore be considered as immoral. The morality, or the immorality, of any play is determined not by its subject-matter, but by the sanity, or insanity, of the author's attitude of mind toward the subject-matter which he has selected for analysis. No play can be immoral unless it is untrue. In *The Pardon,* M. Lemaître has shown no tendency to minimize the mutual responsibility that results from the dual infidelity of the husband and the wife; and, in *The Other Danger,* M. Donnay has not endeavored to diminish in any way the tragic pathos of the situation in

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which his erstwhile illicit lovers find themselves finally involved. Such plays as these are not immoral, though they exhibit immoral situations and analyze immoral people; for a sane and proper outlook upon life at large is consistently maintained by the aloof and dissociated reason of the authors.

CLAYTON HAMILTON

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THREE MODERN PLAYS FROM THE FRENCH

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

HENRI LAVEDAN

Henri Lavedan is a painter of contemporary manners with an extraordinary endowment of that quality, very difficult to define, which the French call *esprit*. He is also something of a moralist.

Alfred Capus is a painter of manners, but he rarely digs beneath the surface of things. Half a dozen French dramatists of the day possess keen senses of humor at least the equal of that of Lavedan. Brieux is certainly a moralist. Yet Lavedan resembles none of his contemporaries. Perhaps this isolation is partly the result of his birth and early education. A born bourgeois as to class, he lived in a family where "the highest ideals and the strictest sense of what was fitting were of long and traditional standing." Add to this, a good education, with few obstacles to be overcome, and we find the youthful Lavedan in a position to see the life of his time in a clear and steady light. Capus, by reason of his comparatively narrow education, Brieux, because of his preoccupation with social questions, and also of his birth and breeding, Donnay, warped a little by too close application to the erotic—all lack the transcendental outlook of their more fortunate confrère. With equal sureness of touch and sympathy he can show us the intimate life of the full-blooded aristocrat (*The Prince d'Aurec*), and the unfortunate little bourgeoise music-teacher (*Catherine*); he can enter into the sentiments of the "viveur," and then turn round and condemn him with all the imprecations of an enraged Brieux (*The Marquis de Priola*). Where Hervieu sketches a shadow, a lay-figure, Lavedan paints a portrait; where Brieux criticizes

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a condition of affairs, Lavedan makes a living story of it. But Lavedan has distinct limitations; for if little Catherine is well-drawn and sympathetic, she is a trifle too good to be true. If *The Duel* be a supremely skilful piece of technic and an interesting psychological study, its end is weak and unconvincing.

Lavedan is an unequal writer; his occasional shortcomings are probably more noticeable than those of most of his fellow-writers. It seems that he has never been quite sure as to what style of work he was best fitted for. About twenty years after the production of his first play, he was still searching for new ways of presenting his material. Character-drawing is his supreme gift. When we think of the bulk of his work, we forget the weak plots of some of the plays, the faulty technic of many of them, and think only of the three or four commanding figures for which he will long be remembered: The Prince d'Aurec, the Marquis de Priola, and Paul Costard.

A few lines will suffice to render a brief account of the life of Lavedan. Born at Orléans in the year 1859, he was sent to a small seminary not far from his native town, then to the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and the Institution Bossuet at Paris, and later to Jesuit schools at Nantes and Poitiers. He returned to Paris from the provinces to finish his studies, when the War of 1870 broke out. Henri's father placed the youth in the hands of the priests, with whom Henri remained during the terrible siege and the Commune. At the end of those troublous times, he was graduated, and immediately agreed to the wishes of his parents, who had determined to make a lawyer of him; but one year of law was so disagreeable, that upon passing his examinations, he refused to continue to work toward a profession which was obviously so little in accordance with his inclination and ability.

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At this period, for the first time, Lavedan began to experience some of the hardships of life in Paris which are usually the lot of young men without a profession. He was not long, however, in making a way for himself in the field in which he was sure to succeed.

Among his first literary efforts were numerous little dialogues—of a type which he has continued to write to this day—: diminutive *quarts d'heure,* which made their appearance from time to time in newspapers and magazines. But printed dialogues hardly make a dramatist. One day he showed some of these trifles to the ever-ready and enterprising Antoine, who produced some of them at his Théâtre Libre, to the horror of many members of the critical world, who considered the little " scènes " as decadent tag-ends of plays. Lavedan himself realized that these were not very ambitious efforts, and set to work on a serious long play, *Une Famille,* which had the good luck to be accepted by the Comédie Française and played, in 1891. The play is not a significant one, except that it proved that Lavedan was able to construct a full-length play and hold the interest of the audience. Still, the " dialogues " style was still to be observed in this larger fabric; *Une Famille* was in reality a cleverly strung series of conversations. It may be well to look into one or two of these trifles, for they give evidence of some of the chief qualities of the writer: observation of details, and skill in dialogue.

Paul and his sister Françoise meet early one morning: she is coming home from the ball, he from the club. Paul has lost a good deal of money, while she has been " fearfully bored." He tells his sister that if she fails to appreciate the men she meets at dances she may lose her chance of marrying.

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FRANÇOISE. I tell you, I despise the whole lot!

PAUL. Of course, but that is no reason for not marrying one of them.

FRANÇOISE. Think so?

PAUL. Lord!—Of course! Take the least impossible one. He'll improve with age, settle down, and in a year or a year and a half, when he'll be merely a father to you, well, you'll have a very nice, respectable, little husband.

FRANÇOISE. I tell you, I have other ideas on the question of marriage. Mine will be a marriage of inclination—pleasure.

PAUL. Impossible! I've given the matter more thought than you may perhaps imagine, and I have come to this profound conclusion, little girl: that all necessary things—like getting born, and eating, and loving—it's all a pose, a nasty pose. People try to make it attractive, put seasoning into it—but—! It's dressed up and set to music, but the sauces don't last forever: you've got to swallow the terrible fish. Marriage is one of the fish, just like birth and death— . . . A gay life we lead, we must admit! And we look the part! You're green, little sister!

FRANÇOISE. And you violet!

PAUL. It's the dawn that makes us look like that.

FRANÇOISE. The dawn and all the rest of it. Our faces only reflect our souls—that's the truth of the matter.

PAUL. Our souls? Our souls?

FRANÇOISE. Don't you believe in the soul?

PAUL. Yes, little sister, when I'm sick, otherwise——

FRANÇOISE. What?

PAUL. Nothing. I believe that we are put into the world to go through a number of gestures, which are always the same; which must be gone through at the same time—and then we all fade away——

In *Every Evening* (*Scène de tous les soirs*) three clubmen are gathered together at two in the morning, and inquire what they can do to kill time.

VOUVANS. Well, what are we doing now?

D'ARGENTAY. Yes, what? . . .

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COUTRAS. We're living: this is life.

VOUVANS. We've been doing the same thing together for the past twelve years.

D'ARGENTAY. And we're not tired of it. Curious!

VOUVANS. But most curious of all, is to think that in twenty years' time we shall be just as amused by this as we are now—perhaps more.

D'ARGENTAY. Very possibly. I remember, I once met a poor girl in the street, pale, sickly-looking. I said to her, "You must be tired of it all, aren't you?" She said with a smile, "No, I rather like it: I get used to it from day to day."

VOUVANS. Well—what are we doing?

D'ARGENTAY. Something very Parisian: we're smoking. Voilà!

Here is Lavedan the moralist. Where Capus observes life and passes by without comment, Lavedan points a lesson; Capus laughs with or at his "flâneurs,"—literally, "wasters"—Lavedan allows them to drop remarks revealing tragic depths. The little conversation between Paul and Françoise is a case in question. Lavedan delights in showing us the boulevardier, the clubman, the Don Juan, the fop; but he rarely fails to show both sides of his character. In the plays these sketches become expanded, the portraits are more detailed. The plot, in nearly every case, serves largely as framework: the character is of supreme importance.

Le Nouveau Jeu (1898) is probably the most amusing play Lavedan ever wrote. In it, that type of boulevardier who tries at all costs to appear original is crystallized; his *argot*, his antics, his good and bad qualities are set before us with a verisimilitude which this dramatist never surpassed. Paul Costard, the principal character of the piece, is at the theater one evening in company with his mistress, and declares that unless she behaves herself and

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allows him to direct his opera-glasses in whatever part of the house he pleases, he will obtain an introduction to the young girl whom he has been observing in a nearby box, and marry her. Bobette dares him; he takes the dare, leaves her abruptly, gets the introduction to the young lady, and before long is allowed by her parents to become an "accepted" suitor. It so happens that Alice Labosse herself is something of an "original." When her mother tells her that Costard wishes to marry her, she replies that the whole matter leaves her indifferent.

MME. LABOSSE. You don't mean to tell me that it makes no difference to you whether you marry the first-comer or not?

ALICE. Absolutely none!

MME. LABOSSE. Old or young, hideous or handsome, rich or poor—it's all the same to you?

ALICE. The same? No. But I have no desire for one any more than for the other. I tell you, Mamma, it's of no importance. I accept everything that each day brings me: good and bad together. Don't worry me now; be nice.

MME. LABOSSE. It's perfectly monstrous! Think of having a disposition like yours, my child! Only eighteen years old, too. You are laying up trouble for yourself——

ALICE. Perhaps.

MME. LABOSSE. And you don't care at all?

ALICE. No, it makes no difference to me.

Costard marries her—and a week later returns to Bobette. Then begins the intrigue. It is not very new, and not at all respectable. Alice loses no time in finding a lover; Costard is discovered under embarrassing circumstances, but before long Alice takes revenge, and is found in a no less embarrassing situation. The play must be taken in that spirit of aloof unreality which Lamb urged we should have to assume when seeing the artificial comedies of the English Restoration; in that sense, *Le Nouveau*

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Jeu is the best of comedy, but if we take facts for facts, it is dismal tragedy. At the last, Costard and Alice, equally guilty, are called before the tribunal and severely censured by the judge. After the moral and sententious "lecture," Costard replies:

I freely admit everything, Monsieur. It is life, simple every-day life. It is life to get married and regret it; to endeavor to escape from the bonds of holy matrimony, to be caught, to desert house and family, and then go the limit. . . .

JUDGE. Do you not regret having destroyed the happiness of your wife?

COSTARD. Not in the least. She could never have been happy with me. I'm good for everything in the world except marriage.

JUDGE. Then you had no business marrying.

COSTARD. How was I to know? It's just like spinach: in order to dislike it, you must first taste it——

Le Nouveau Jeu is hardly more than a series of episodes, but with what unerring skill are they contrived! They are more than comments on certain sections of life; they are definite and truthful pictures, full of verve, throbbing with vitality. Their morality cannot well be called into question: Lavedan paints what he sees. He is a remarkably clever bystander.

Since the fall of the last Monarchy in France in 1871, and indeed ever since the Revolution, the aristocracy has never quite found its proper position in the state. It was forced either to participate in the government and thereby relinquish much of its former prestige, or remain apart and preserve the tradition of culture and gentility which had for so many centuries been in its sole keeping. The indomitable pride, the arrogant superiority, the consciousness of the divine right of nobility, the pathos of the dying

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out of the Ancien Régime, Lavedan centered in his finest character creation: The Prince d'Aurec. The entire play (1892) is concerned with this suave aristocrat; the plot —such as it is—and the minor personages, serve but to throw into relief this insufferable but somehow sympathetic snob. By reason of his birth, the Prince believes that he has but to "invent a clever saying—a perfume, a shade—set it in circulation; a new cravat, a distinctive hat, discover a new method of riding, render a vice as attractive as the ridicule of virtue; revolt against the vulgar diamond of the Jew, the bronze *objets d'art* of the bourgeois, the hardware of the Peruvian! That is the only occupation worthy a gentleman nowadays!" If he borrows money from De Horn, he is under no obligation, he believes, to pay it back: *Noblesse oblige!* Has he not allowed De Horn to sit at his table, De Horn, a Jew and a bourgeois! Has he not condescended to be seen in public with him, even driven his carriages? And does the Jew then ask for his curséd money? This attitude is a little difficult to understand; but it must be remembered that the Prince had been educated with the idea that his family had from the days of the Crusades been one of the most important and influential in France, that because of its accomplishments to it was ever due the respect of every succeeding generation of Frenchmen, be they Royalists or Republicans. Yet the Prince plays a losing game: he lives in a Republic, where justice is done. De Horn will have his money. The Duchess pays the Jew, who disappears; the Prince bows down momentarily to his fate, but his last words redeem him; right or wrong, he is a noble to the end. "To-day I can swear to do only one thing: live like an honest man, and when the time comes, die like a prince." We may doubt whether he will live as he says, but we are positive that he means to die like a prince. "In

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war?" asks his mother. "Will you die in battle?" Montade the novelist answers that that is no more than any of us would do, and the Prince replies with incomparable hauteur—like one of his Crusader forefathers—"Il y a la manière!" All of France might die for her on the field of battle, but *he* will die in his own particular "manner!" The line is worthy Cyrano's "Ma panache!" !!!

Viveurs! (1895) is a series of interesting *genre* scenes; it contains little that cannot be found later, and better developed, in three or four of the more important plays. *Catherine* (1898) is one of those rare comedies in contemporary French drama which can with impunity be presented by ladies' boarding schools. Although it could scarcely be termed insipid, the studied avoidance of anything unpleasant in subject-matter or treatment, the inherent goodness of the heroine, leave us with the impression that the author was either uninspired or else that he wished to write a play which could not possibly give offense.

Le Marquis de Priola (1902) presents a striking contrast. That play, together with *Le Duel* (1905), are, among Lavedan's later plays, the most significant. Add to these *Le Prince d'Aurec* and *Le Nouveau Jeu,* and we have the best and most representative plays of the author.

Le Marquis de Priola is the most pointedly moral of any of the plays. Don Juan has always been an attractive figure; but among his many interpreters he has found none who drew so poignant a lesson from his famous escapades. The sinister Marquis (played by the incomparable Le Bargy at the Comédie Française) is the irresistible seducer, the arch-demon whose fierce onslaughts have as yet never failed to attain their desired end. "I am a dilettante," he says, "a collector who avidly looks on at the spectacle of the hesitations, troubles, fevers and agonies of the femi-

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nine heart. It is a divine comedy: I see women laugh, cry, suffer, lie. . . . This is an exquisite joy to me—always provided that those smiles, kisses, tears, are brilliantly executed: they must be things of beauty." To his *protégé* Pierre Morain, a young man whom he has had the apparent decency to adopt, he says: "Don't believe in women, they will believe in you. Domineer over them. Never fall in love: you will burn your fingers if you do. Never for a second admit to yourself that they are of the slightest importance, that they can influence your destiny by the weight of a single hair. Fear no woman, believe no woman, above all those who say they are honest; they are the worst of all." At an embassy ball in Paris the Marquis' divorced wife, since remarried, catches sight of her former husband, and immediately realizes that his hold on her is as strong as ever. Afraid of herself, she confides in her puritanical friend, Mme. de Savières, who consents to remonstrate with the Marquis. But with consummate skill the Marquis, who knows how to deal with puritans, nearly achieves the conquest of the envoy; indeed, Mme. de Chesne, Priola's former wife, intervenes just in time to save her friend. The idea of making violent love to Mme. de Chesne has taken hold of the Marquis. But Thérèse de Valleroy has meantime promised to come to the Marquis' home to see "the famous collection of almanacs." But Priola's preoccupation with Mme. de Chesne leads him to insult Thérèse and cruelly wound her pride. He plays with her a few minutes, and then sends her home, saying to her as she leaves: "Let us be more than lovers: let us be friends!" Now there is one obstacle to the reconquering of Mme. de Chesne: Pierre Morain. The young man, revolted at the cruelty of his "guardian," begs him not to persecute the poor woman. The conflict gives rise to a superb scene, which results in Pierre's decla-

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ration that he will live no longer with his guardian. Mme. de Chesne, receiving an old letter calculated to arouse in her the sensations and memories of her first love for the Marquis, is ready to give in to him, but her virtuous friend Mme. de Savières suggests that she test the fidelity of the lover. If, as he says, he is really in love with his former wife, he will not make love to her, Mme. de Savières. But again the puritanical woman comes near to succumbing to the diabolic wooing of Don Juan. Pierre, who has been clearing out the Marquis' desk and rearranging old letters and papers, comes across a photograph of his mother: the truth then flashes across him—the dishonor of his father's "accidental" death—and he decides on revenge. The next day he confronts his guardian with the photograph. "I ought to kill you, but it is not worth my while to do it: your death is not far off. I shall let you go." "What do you mean?" asks the Marquis.—"That the life you have been leading is beginning to tell on you; you haven't long to live." The Marquis, overcome with rage and fear, tells Pierre that he is his own son, then falls, stricken with apoplexy. Mme. de Savières' husband, a doctor, is present. After ausculting the Marquis, he says: "Acute Ataxia. In six months he will be blind and completely paralyzed." —"Will he keep his reason?"—"Yes. He may last twenty years."—"How horrible!" says Mme. de Savières. "And who will take care of him?"—Pierre replies: "I."

Why is it that in the realm of modern drama so many writers have in their first few efforts produced their best work, their most lasting plays? Sudermann, Max Halbe, Frank Wedekind, Donnay; to a certain extent Hauptmann, Lemaître, and now Lavedan, appear to have reached their highest point of development during the first eight or ten years of activity. Without trying to delve too deep into the reasons, we may at least note that many of these

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dramatists were at first content merely to draw characters and not to comment at any great length upon them; to paint, not to explain. Lavedan painted a great portrait in the *Prince d'Aurec;* in *Cyrano de Bergerac,* Rostand did the same thing. In *Le Marquis de Priola,* Lavedan attempted, with a good deal of success, to explain motives and point a moral; in *Chantecler,* Rostand went to the very depths of his hero's character, with remarkable success. What Rostand will do in the future remains to be seen; what Lavedan will do—well, he seems to have done. And his latest plays cause us to regret his defection from the early manner. With advancing years, that philosophical *penchant* which is innate in Frenchmen has got the upper hand with Lavedan. In *The Marquis de Priola* he went as far as an artist can safely go; but with *The Duel* he went a step beyond. In *Le Goût du Vice,* in spite of occasional flashes reminiscent of the days of *Le Nouveau Jeu,* he is so pointedly moral that we begin to feel that we are being preached at.

Le Duel (1905) is concerned with the duel of two brothers, for a woman. Doctor Morey, a well-known alienist, a Freethinker and Atheist, and the Abbé Daniel, a devout priest, are the brothers in question. The Duke de Chailles is a degenerate morphine-fiend, under treatment at the Doctor's sanatarium. He has only a few months to live. The Duchess, coming regularly to see her husband, has been attracted by the Doctor, who in turn is drawn toward the charming woman, whose ideas he feels are so well in accord with his own. Daniel, whom the Doctor has not seen for ten years—their incompatible ideas have kept them apart—comes to ask him to assist in the founding of a dispensary. If Henri refuses to lend his support, perhaps his rich friend the Duchess will undertake to endow it? The duel begins when Henri allows Daniel to speak

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to her "on the condition that she is not to know I am your brother." The thesis of the play is at once made apparent, as Daniel says: "You struggle against disease, I against passion; you save the body, I the soul. Why, at this moment I have among my penitents a woman . . . whose name I do not know, whose face I have never seen. . . . She is unhappily married, and she loves a man who is not her husband. A dozen times she was on the point of revealing her love to him . . . a dozen times she came to my confessional for power to resist. Each time she received that power, and overcame temptation. . . ." Of course, the unknown is the Duchess. From this point on, the play becomes a series of scenes, between the Duchess and Daniel, and between the Duchess and Henri. When she is with the former, she is ready to take the veil, when with the latter, she is ready to give in to him. The deadlock is finally broken by the news that the Duke, in a fit of madness, has thrown himself from the window, and will doubtless die within a few hours. Meantime, a strange metamorphosis has taken place in the mind of Daniel. Together with Henri and the Duchess he has gone to the Bishop for advice: he cannot let his brother marry the Duchess. His soul has been in the struggle, and he is jealous of his brother's victory. But when it is learned that the Duke is dead, and after thinking over the Bishop's advice, he conquers his personal feelings, and bids the Duchess marry Henri, saying that it is her duty to become a wife and a mother. Too deeply wounded by the duel, he will leave for the Orient in company with the Bishop. Henri then takes the Duchess in his arms.

The idea is excellent, the dialogue concise and swift, and the struggle as clearly defined as a Hervieu could ask for. But after all, we may well ask, what of it? The knot is cut just at the critical point. Opportune deaths,

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the recognition of long-lost fathers, and convenient marriages, are all very well for conventional comedies; but where the problem is of so great importance as Lavedan would lead us to believe it in *Le Duel,* we can accept no such facile *dénouement.* Certainly, the Duke was likely to kill himself at any time; but his doing so just when the Duchess would have to decide her own fate, ruins the thesis set before us. The Duchess is being continually swayed between two strong wills, which correspond with two selves within her, but when the *Deux ex machina* steps in, she is allowed to escape. At the end of the play, she is no different from what she was as the curtain rose on the first act. The Duchess therefore ceases to interest us. Daniel, near the close of the play, begins to interest us only as he decides to depart for the Far East.

Since *Le Duel* Lavedan appears to be searching round for new subjects. The aristocracy and the boulevard still possess charms for him, while the history of France, and the question of war, cause him to hover about the haunts of his first successes. *Sire* (1909) is a romantic play, with a historical background. A young man pretends that he is the lost Louis XVII, and convinces a half-crazy countess that he is really the son of Louis XVI. Through five acts of conventional intrigue, the Figaro-like Roulette manages to hold the interest.

"In *Le Goût du Vice*" (1911), says Lavedan, "I have tried to change my manner; I have done my best to transform myself, simply to give variety to my work. Those who have seen *Sire, Le Marquis de Priola,* and *Le Duel* will notice this, and judge whether or no I have succeeded." Yes, he has changed his manner; and we regret it, we who have seen the plays he mentions!

The latest printed play [1] is *Servir* (1912). A consider-

[1] *Pétard* was produced in the spring of 1914.

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able departure from all the preceding "manners" of the author, it is certainly his best work since *Le Duel*. This is the story of a father who is a born soldier, but who has been forced to remain a civilian; and his son, who is an officer, but whose scruples of conscience are radically opposed to the "profession." This son has discovered an explosive many times more powerful than any heretofore known, but refuses to reveal the secret for the service of the *Patrie*. The father, driven by his innate desire to serve—a desire, the author is careful to tell us, to engage in war as such, not primarily in the interest of his country—spies on his son and discovers the secret. The big scene is the struggle between father and son, with the mother between them. The father tears the buttons from the son's uniform, saying that he is unworthy his position. The mother, sympathizing with her child, interferes and attempts to kill herself. This brings the men to their senses. Then the father tells them that he has been commissioned by the government to prevent the mobilization of the enemy's army in Morocco, and lets them know further that another son, a soldier in Morocco, has been murdered by that enemy which is now about to make war on France. The sense of personal injury then turns the tables: mother, father, son, are actuated by a desire for vengeance, and they all welcome the boom of the cannon announcing the declaration of war.

The family struggle, and its relation to national affairs,—the main idea of the play,—are very skilfully and interestingly welded together. Yet the son as a French officer is hard to accept. How could such a man think as he thinks, and still remain an officer? Again Lavedan has strained a point in order that his thesis might be worked out.

When an author begins his career and wins his great-

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est successes in one kind of work, we are loath to see him venture far afield. Often he does this at his peril. Lavedan is at his best in pure character-drawing, like the *Prince d'Aurec;* in other fields he has done sincere and good work, but in those other fields there is lacking that sure touch, that evenness which he once taught us to expect. He may still do significant work, he could hardly do otherwise, but—" Il y a la manière! "

PLAYS PRODUCED:

Une Famille	1891	(One Family)
Le Prince d'Aurec	1892	(The Prince d'Aurec)
Les Deux Noblesses	1894	(The Two Nobilities)
Viveurs!	1895	(High Life!)
Catherine	1898	
Le Nouveau Jeu	1898	(The Latest Fad)
Le Vieux Marcheur	1899	(The Old Sport)
Le Marquis de Priola	1902	(The Marquis de Priola)
Varennes (in collaboration with G. Lenôtre)	1904	
Le Duel	1905	(The Duel)
Sire	1909	(Sire)
Le Goût du Vice	1911	(The Taste for Vice)
Servir	1913	(To Serve)
Pétard	1914	

(Lavedan's *Catherine, The Duel,* and *Sire* have been produced in the United States in English,—*Catherine,* by Miss Annie Russell in October, 1898, *The Duel,* by Mr. Otis Skinner in February, 1906, and *Sire,* by Mr. Skinner in January, 1911.

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JULES LEMAITRE

"Criticism," says Jules Lemaître, "is the art of enjoying books." M. Lemaître has practised what he preached, and in some thirty thick volumes he has amassed his enjoyment of books and plays. *Les Impressions de Théâtre* and *Les Contemporains* have already assumed a place which they will long occupy among the most thoughtful and charming essays of the Nineteenth Century.

When he speaks of Shakespeare and Molière, it is as if he had never heard of either before; he records his first impressions of *Hamlet* and *Le Misanthrope* as if these plays had just come fresh from the press. Unhampered by the accumulated prejudices of former generations, he analyzes in a leisurely and unorthodox manner each work, recording with absolute sincerity his opinions on Georges Ohnet and Racine, Paul Bourget and Rousseau. When he tells us that Racine is worth reading, that the author of the *Ironmaster* is vastly overrated, we feel ready at once to believe him. His independence of thought is naïvely manifested in his essay on Maupassant, in which he says that he was at first inclined to underrate the genius of the young writer simply because the great Flaubert spoke of him in such glowing terms. Here is the opening paragraph of that essay:

"I used to go from time to time to see Gustave Flaubert at Croisset (that was in 1880). It appears that I met Maupassant there one day, just as he was leaving for Paris. At least, that is what Maupassant says. I really don't re-

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member: I have the most capricious memory in the world. But I recall clearly that Flaubert spoke enthusiastically of his young friend, and that he read to me, with that sonorous voice of his, a story which appeared some months later in the volume entitled *Des Vers*. It had to do with the separation of two lovers, after a last walk in the country: *he* was brutal, *she* quietly desperate. I thought it not at all bad, but I was somewhat on my guard because of the aged Flaubert's extravagant admiration, so that I did not at that time realize that it was really very good. Maupassant was at that time, etc. . . ."

This informal, easy, conversational way of writing criticism makes Lemaître delightful reading, so that we too are likely perhaps to behave as the critic did in the presence of the "aged Flaubert," and be on our guard, and fail to see the extraordinary merit of the criticism. Profundity of thought and heaviness of style do not of necessity go hand in hand. Lemaître is as profound as Brunetière, the only difference between the two being that Lemaître amuses us with unexpected quips and turns, amusing anecdotes, and helps us to retain important points which might otherwise escape us, while Brunetière, saying perhaps as much, risks tiring us, because his method of presentation lacks lightness, variety, esprit. Sarcey, that benevolent despot of the French stage for nearly half a century, is more closely akin to Lemaître than Brunetière, by reason of his simplicity and occasionally brutal sincerity; but Sarcey is a literary bourgeois, Lemaître an aristocrat.

A critic, and above all a dramatic critic, who ventures into the field of drama, runs grave risks. Do not his brother critics hold him up to the standards for which he himself has stood—and many others for which he has not—and condemn him for falling short of those principles the nonobservance of which he has so often censured in others?

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Lemaître's first play, *Révoltée,* was produced in 1889. It was not a success, and was received with a good deal of adverse comment.

Born in a little town in Touraine in 1853, he received his early education in his native province, pursued his studies later in Paris, taught school in Le Havre and two other French cities, and, for a short time, in Algiers. At the age of thirty-one he permanently established himself in Paris, where he had been summoned to fill the position of dramatic critic on the *Journal des Débats.* At that time he was known to a few readers as the author of a slight volume of youthful verses, some of them crude and some delicate, called *Les Médaillons* (1880), and some of those essays which were later collected in *Les Contemporains.* The poems were followed seven years later by a collection of short stories, *Sérénus,* which gave evidence of real creative power, and proved the writer well capable of telling a story in direct and convincing terms. The versatile young man was spreading his wings, then, in the late 'eighties; but as he manifested a desire to fly in the direction of the stage, he a dramatic critic, his confrères took umbrage, and declared —with more or less truth—that he had not proved himself a dramatist by writing *Révoltée.* For the next few years he continued writing plays, finding time however to write one of his finest works, the novel *Les Rois* (1893). As we are primarily concerned with Lemaître the dramatist, we must content ourselves by accepting the verdict of critics and public, and recording the fact that Lemaître's only novel still remains one of the most popular and highly-thought-of novels of the generation. *Contes blancs* (1900) and *En marge des vieux livres* (1905-1907) are likewise among the most charming works of the author.

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Révoltée is decidedly a first attempt, crude and full of "influences." It seems as if the first-nighter had relied a little too much on scattered tag-ends of Ibsen and some of the young innovators of the Théâtre Libre. The play might well be called *Impressions de Théâtre.* A reading of the piece leaves one with the feeling that he has seen it all before: the stupid and uninteresting Georg Tesman husband, and the misunderstood wife, with her struggle for freedom, self-expression. There is some hesitancy in the story, the plot moves on the wheels of time-worn conventions, there is a duel and a final reconciliation in which it is hard to believe. But the play is noteworthy by reason of some good bits of characterization; Hélène and her professor husband Rousseau, are what render *Révoltée* worth reading. Lemaître was the first to realize the weakness of his work: in his own criticism of it he says: "You see, the last act is very mediocre—now I have thought of a much better one, but it is too late." Instead of rewriting the play, he proceeded to write another.

An incident serves to reveal Lemaître's ideas on playwriting, ideas which were soon to develop and form the basis of many of his later plays. Sarcey said of the next play, *Le Député Leveau,* "This is no play." To which Lemaître replied, "Je m'en moque, si c'est de la vie." (Literally, "I don't care a hang, so long as it is life.") It was hardly that, but the answer was worthy of its author.

Le Député Leveau (1890) is well written, well constructed, and much nearer "life" than *Révoltée,* but it is still far from *Le Pardon* and *La Massière.* It is a satire on the parvenu politician, and is concerned with his love-affair and subsequent divorce. Leveau, after falling in love with the Marquise de Grèges, seeks to divorce his wife,

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but is at first met with considerable opposition; this is later broken down in a rather unconvincing manner. The Marquise's husband has made friends with Leveau for political reasons, but Leveau is not long in learning that he has served merely as an instrument in the Marquis' hands, and is the victim of an intrigue. The *dénouement* is feeble: Leveau sends the Marquis an anonymous letter, arranges that the Marquise and himself shall be found together, irreparably compromised, and that he (the Marquis) will be forced to divorce his wife. The plot works, the divorce is obtained, and we are led to suppose that Leveau ultimately becomes the husband of the Marquise. The story is "theatrical," but there are numerous bits of characterization which partly redeem the play.

Mariage blanc (1891) is one of the most charming and interesting comedies of its day. Jacques de Tièvre, a *blasé* man of the world, a relic of twenty years' dissipation, comes to Mentone on the Riviera, to rest. There he meets a Mme. Aubert and her two daughters: Marthe, and her half-sister, Simone, a young girl in the last stages of consumption. His assiduous visits are interpreted by the mother and Marthe as a desire on his part to marry Marthe, but it is really the invalid who has attracted him. The idea of making love to a young woman who has but a few months to live appeals to his abnormal imagination. He tells Mme. Aubert of his strange passion; she is naturally astonished, but, noticing that Simone reciprocates his love, and not wishing to risk the shock which a refusal of Jacques as a suitor would cause to the girl, she gives her consent to the marriage. At first the disappointed and wounded Marthe opposes the match, but as Simone is suddenly taken ill, she "forgives" Jacques. But she cannot forgive the sister who, she believes, robbed her of a

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husband, and, partly out of spite, partly by inclination, she gives Jacques a rendezvous. Simone surprises the two, and falls dead.[1]

The interest of the play lies in its strange plot, and in the characters of Marthe and Jacques. Lemaître tells us, in answer to one of the numerous attacks made on the play: "My mistake was in believing that Jacques de Tièvre's idea was in nowise out of the ordinary, that his behavior and sentiments were easy to understand, quite acceptable as a matter of course. And why should I not have thought so? Jacques' dream is one which I myself once had, some twelve or fifteen years ago, spontaneously, in regard to a young girl I met in a family 'pension' where I took my meals. Doubtless, it was only a dream . . . but in reality that dream did not seem so absurd or impossible. Above all, there appeared to be nothing immoral in it." But Jacques' attitude may be condemned on the grounds of morality; for, in spite of the fact that perhaps he loved Simone after his marriage, he married her out of pity and, to a certain extent, because the whole adventure was romantic and piquant. Marthe as a character is scarcely more than a sketch; but how deft are the touches which make her live, how deeply we feel with her her sense of injury and loss! Will Lemaître ever write a play about Marthe, expanding her field of action, entering with greater detail into her inmost thoughts?

Two years after *Mariage blanc* came *Flipote,* a rather rigid, "well-made" piece. The characterization is good, but the story decidedly banal. Two lovers "separate the day they find themselves rivals in public favor." Between

[1] The original ending, according to Lemaître, was this: Marthe, knowing that any sort of exposure would be certain death to her sister, opens a window in the room where Simone is lying, which results in the consumptive's death.

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Mariage blanc and *Les Rois*, a comparatively weak piece of work can easily be forgiven.

It will be remembered that the title of Lemaître's only novel was *Les Rois*. That novel he dramatized in 1893. The play enjoyed great success at the Théâtre de la Renaissance. Like many of the plays of François de Curel, the austere writer of *Les Fossiles*, this was based upon a rather dramatic newspaper clipping: the disappearance of a prince of the House of Austria. Like Curel, Lemaître used the incident merely as an excuse for a psychological work of deep import. The old King of Alfania has abdicated in favor of his son Hermann, a young man whose principles of democracy and progress are in direct opposition to his father's. As he ascends the throne, he is confronted with the grave problem of a popular uprising, the object of which is the increase of the rights and power of the people. Once crowned, Hermann, acting contrary to the advice of his wife Wilhelmina and his ministers, decides in favor of the people. Hermann's revolutionary doctrines are not all his own, for a woman, Frida de Thalberg, his former mistress, had imbued him with the spirit of freedom which caused so great a disturbance in the kingdom. Awdotia Latanief, a "revolutionary mystic," friend of Frida, has likewise had much to do in the shaping of the mind of the young king. Meanwhile, the people, having tasted of freedom, invade the palace, demanding further rights and more power. Giving way to the entreaties of his wife Hermann orders the General to "do his duty"; the crowd is dispersed, some revolutionaries are killed, and for the moment the revolt is put down. False to his own principles, Hermann decides to go to Frida for consolation; she is stationed not far away, at Loewenberg. He leaves, followed by Wilhelmina. At the Pavilion of Orsova are Frida, the king, and Awdotia. The two women, at first alone, discuss

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the political situation and Awdotia proposes that Hermann be assassinated in order that the revolution may take its course unhindered; but Frida, fearing for the life of the man she loves, promises that if she be left alone with him, she will induce him to abdicate. Hermann and Frida are then left together; Frida's passion for the liberty of Alfania has now given way to her particular passion for its king. "I don't want to be the shameful rival of the Queen of Alfania; but if you are truly unhappy and tired of your rôle of king and will abdicate, then, then, I will be yours!" Hermann is willing to give up all for Frida; but just at this moment the figure of Wilhelmina is seen in the background. Ignorant of the danger, Hermann takes Frida in his arms. Wilhelmina enters, takes the revolver Awdotia has left on the table, and aims at Frida; but Hermann, stepping between them, receives the shot and dies a moment later. Wilhelmina tells the aged king what she has done, and he replies, making her the Regent: "You have done so much to defend the crown, that I know of no one in whose hands it could safer be!" This drama of "passion and ideas" is thoroughly effective, except the final act; the psychological insight of the author is deeper than in any other of his plays, with the exception of *Le Pardon*. But the interest is so often shifted that we are left a little bewildered. If Lemaître had concentrated more on the characters of Hermann, Frida, and Wilhelmina, we should doubtless have had a finer work. That finer work was to come two years later.

With *L'Age difficile* (1895) Lemaître gave proof of his command over the dramatic medium. With perfect ease he conducts his hero, a man of middle age, through dangerous love affairs, and supplies us with a series of delightful *genre* scenes. Those parts of the play dealing with the "Indian Summer" of Chambray, his meeting an old sweet-

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heart after many years of separation from her, are handled with great dexterity and gentle tenderness.

Up to the year 1895 Lemaître had made various attempts with a good measure of success in the delineation of character; in *Les Rois* and *Mariage blanc* he had gone far into the analysis of human motives; but not until *Le Pardon* (1895) did all his power of presenting human beings and dealing with real problems come to its fullest fruition. *Les Rois,* as we have seen, was ragged in places, *Mariage blanc* somewhat abnormal and inclined to be over-sentimental; *Le Pardon* comes as near being a Slice of Life as Porto-Riche's *Amoureuse,* or any of its numerous progeny.

For commercial, and occasionally for artistic reasons, several modern plays of full length contain but five, four, or three characters. The charming comedy, *The Mollusc,* by Hubert Henry Davies, and François de Curel's *La Danse devant le miroir* contain but four characters each. *Le Pardon* has only three. A dramatist who is able to write a play with so few characters and make that play interesting and effective must be acknowledged by reason of that *tour de force* an accomplished man of the theater. In the second act of *The Thief,* Henry Bernstein has written a duologue which for dramatic tension could hardly be surpassed; but the intrinsic interest of the situation itself, which had been prepared for in the foregoing act through the agency of a number of people, helped sustain the act. Lemaître's story is simple and commonplace: Suzanne has been unfaithful to Georges and wishes to become reconciled with him. Their friend Thérèse brings about the reconciliation, but meantime Georges falls in love with her. Suzanne learns of this, and is at first not inclined to forgive her husband; then, as Georges makes it clear to her that his "slip" was momentary, accidental, that he will ever after be a model husband, Suzanne

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gives in. Here is no mystery, here are few opportunities for the "grand style!" What could Bernstein have done with this plot?

In *Le Pardon* Lemaître has voluntarily done away with such moving scenes as are ordinarily called "effective". In the story he conceived he might have made room for many of these, but he preferred to enter into a detailed analysis of the three characters he chose to treat. With a keenness and austerity close akin to the literary hauteur of Paul Hervieu, he has applied himself solely to inquiring into the thoughts and feelings of Suzanne, Georges, and Thérèse. In brief he says: Here is what happens every day; it is not pleasant, it is not edifying, but it is life. I have attempted to use this episode and tried to demonstrate the subtle workings of the minds of these three people. If Suzanne is unfaithful to her husband, how will that fact affect him? If, after her husband has forgiven her, on certain conditions, he is unfaithful to her, how will she feel? If each at last is equally guilty, will that balance accounts? Momentarily, it will, says Lemaître; but he pessimistically and truly adds that this unhappy couple is no more secure than they were when the play opened. Suzanne says as the curtain falls: "Oh Georges, God have pity on us!" This is a step in advance of the solutions of the same problem offered by Hervieu and Porto-Riche—in *Les Tenailles* and *Amoureuse*. In *Les Tenailles* the unfaithful wife is riveted to her husband by circumstances. Her fault is learned years after, when it is too late for her to remarry. In *Amoureuse*, she is brought closer to her husband, because only through her possible loss is he made fully aware of his love for her.

M. Lemaître has twice in his plays made use of his gift of verse. Two slight but very amusing satirical comedies mark his sole attempts in the realm of the purely fanciful:

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La Bonne Hélène (1896), a two-act parody something in the manner of Meilhac and Halévy, and the comic opera, *Le Mariage de Télémaque* (1910), in which Maurice Donnay was his collaborator. With such a combination it is no wonder that this delightful trifle enjoyed a long and successful run at the Opéra Comique.

The years between 1889 and 1896 were those in which Lemaître's development as a dramatist was most marked and rapid; *Révoltée* is the weakest of the plays, and *Le Pardon* probably the most close-knit, best thought out, and best constructed. This development of his dramatic sense practically stopped seven years after its inception; for in none of the three important plays which followed *Le Pardon* did he add materially to his skill as a craftsman or his ideas as a thinker. *L'Aînée* (1898), *La Massière,* and *Bertrade* (1905) are the products of a man who has already said his say. Of these three the first is the most original. It is the story of Pastor Petermann, a stolid Swiss, who has six daughters "to marry off." "Think of it," he says, "six daughters to marry! It's a problem. I must show them off, give garden parties, teas, concerts; bring young men to the house, and hold them. Old Pastor Petermann's home has become a shrine of Love. But I find it all very pleasant, this contrast between the sacred mission of the minister of the Gospel and his preoccupations as father of a family." Here is a good subject for comedy, a splendid opportunity which the dramatist has not failed to grasp. The first two acts are among the best Lemaître ever wrote; but eventually he turns all his attention to The Eldest Daughter—L'Aînée. There is some resemblance to Marthe's situation in *Mariage blanc,* as little Norah steps in and appropriates Mikils, who has asked for the hand of Lia, the eldest. Lia has ever been the drudge of the family; her continual sacrifices have always

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been accepted as a matter of course. Five years pass; Lia is thirty. As before, she is the drudge, the servant of her sisters and their infant children. At last a friend of the family, Muller, a man of fifty, asks her to become his wife. She does not love him, but feels that she must take the chance. Just as she accepts his offer, the seventeen-year-old Dorothée exercises her youthful cunning, and wins Muller. The parents do not hesitate to agree to the match. In silence, Lia accepts defeat, until one day, at a garden party given by Dursay, a neighbor, she is astonished on being asked to dance with the host's nephew. He has divined the innate charm of the Eldest and begins to make love to her in true romantic style. Dazzled for the moment by the unexpectedness of the young man's declarations, she goes with him into the pavilion. Someone outside calls for her. "If you go now," says Dursay, "you are lost." Terrified at the prospect, yet yielding to an instinct of blind fear of further trouble, she opens the door and calls, "Here I am!" Lia seems irreparably compromised; but, strangely enough, Norah and Mikils side with her and persuade the Petermanns that "Really, what irritates you is not what she has done . . . but the scandal." Madame Petermann agrees with Norah: "Don't you see, it is Lia's very innocence, her simplicity, that have been her undoing? Is it for us to be severe with her, us for whom she has sacrificed everything? . . . If Lia has sinned . . . it is our fault . . . we should take her to our hearts, protect her, and not allow her to suffer. That's what I think!" And the erring daughter is received again into the bosom of her family. The repentant Dursay makes an offer of marriage, which is at length accepted.

The end is a little banal, but a comedy must end in some way. The author was concerned with Lia, and we must admit that she is a well-drawn character.

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La Massière is a play of temperament. The painter Marèze is guilty of "sentimental infidelity" to his wife in his relations with little Juliette, an assistant in his studio. Mme. Marèze, who suspects that her husband's interest in the girl is more than platonic, extracts a promise from him not to receive her except in the studio, and during "business hours"; but a small crisis is brought on as she meets Juliette one day coming from Marèze's private studio in his home. The affair is simply one of sentiment, yet it assumes serious proportions in Madame's eyes. Their son Jacques, however, provides a solution to the problem. Meeting Juliette one day by chance, he falls in love with her, and tells his parents not long after of his wish to marry her. Marèze is deeply troubled, and opposes the marriage from selfish motives; but his wife, seeing the truth of the matter—that Jacques' marriage will put an end to the other affair—brings the two together and induces her husband to give his consent.

The plot again is weak; it does not progress; but the idea, like that in the perennially charming *Eté de la Saint Martin* of Meilhac and Halévy, the attack of "Indian Summer" which comes to men of middle age, and the manner in which it is worked out, make it one of Lemaître's most delightful plays.

Bertrade (1905) is the latest play.[1] The Marquis de Mauferrand, deep in debt, has a daughter, Bertrade, who can be the means of saving her father and establishing him comfortably for the remainder of his life, if she will only consent to become the wife of a rich and unscrupulous banker, Chaillard. But she refuses, in spite of the imprecations and threats of the Marquis. There is one last means: the Marquis can, by marrying a former mistress,

[1] *La Princesse de Clèves* was written about the same time, presumably. It has not been produced.

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the Baroness de Rommelsbach, re-establish himself and pay all his debts. Again Bertrade steps in, convinces her father of the utter shame of the transaction, and persuades him to refuse. This he does, but, as there is no solution left, he kills himself. This is again a rather meretricious story, and would have little value were it not for the study afforded in the character of Bertrade. The dramatist's mistake is in beginning his play either too soon or too late. Bertrade is too busy doing things to allow us to see very much of her personality. She begins to interest us just as the curtain falls, and we must rely on our imagination to fill out the sketch. Had Lemaître begun his play at this point, we might have had another complete, sympathetic, and illuminating picture to place with Suzanne, and Lia, and Frida. As it is, he has given us the ghost of a play, a clever sketch, with a melodramatic plot.

The very openness of mind of Jules Lemaître, his freedom from prejudice, his admirable integrity, render impossible any categorical summing up of his philosophy of life. He is at once skeptic, believer, poet, politician, Republican and Royalist. If, in the realm of the drama, he has failed to maintain so high a standard as some of his contemporaries, if in the final analysis he cannot be considered a playwright whose total output entitles him to a place in the front rank, he has at least contributed to the drama of his generation one play insurpassable of its kind.

PLAYS PRODUCED:[1]

Révoltée	1899	(The Woman Who Revolted)
Le Député Leveau	1890	(Deputy Leveau)
Mariage blanc	1891	(A Marriage and No Marriage)

[1] *La Princesse de Clèves*, dramatized from Mme. de La Fayette's novel of the same name, has not yet been produced.

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Flipote	1893	
Les Rois	1893	(The Kings)
L'Age difficile	1895	(The Difficult Age)
Le Pardon	1895	(The Pardon)
La Bonne Hélène	1896	(Good Helen)
L'Aînée	1898	(The Eldest Sister)
La Massière	1905	(The Studio Assistant)
Bertrade	1905	
Le Mariage de Télémaque (in collaboration with M. Donnay)	1910	(Telemachus' Marriage)

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MAURICE DONNAY

"A play is a love story, and since that story is laid in various places, we are led to believe that plays differ."

These words of Maurice Donnay are the quintessence of his theory of the theater. To him life is a spectacle from which the love element must be extracted and molded into an art form, and that form he has once for all fixed in his finest and best-known play, *Lovers*. Love, within or without the marriage bond, and sex attraction, these are the eternal realities for the poetic and delicate Parisian whose plays remain the delight of Tout-Paris.

Amants opens at the home of Claudine Rozay, a retired actress, who is entertaining a number of children at a party for her own daughter. "Of the correct and elegant mothers who have brought children, not one is married; each of them, like their own hostess, is comfortably established in a *liaison* which assures her, together with luxuries, a sort of outward respectability, and permits her to associate with 'society.'" Georges Vétheuil is a guest at this gathering; he has come to visit the hostess, whom he once casually met, and has asked to be allowed to call and further the acquaintance. In an artfully conducted scene, Claudine gives in to Georges' overtures, and consents to become his mistress. The Comte de Ruyseux, Claudine's "legitimate" lover, the father of Claudine's little daughter, then enters, and the unsuspecting count meets for the first time his new rival. After Georges leaves, Claudine gives vent to her feelings in true Donnayesque fashion:

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CLAUDINE. What's the news?

COUNT. Nothing much.

CLAUDINE. Tell me what there is! No gossip? See anyone?

COUNT. Oh, yes: met Lagny.

CLAUDINE. Ah, what did he have to say?

COUNT. Nothing—since he stopped paying attentions to my wife, he cuts me dead.

CLAUDINE. Really!

COUNT. Or rather, since he has dropped out of the number of those who pay attention to my wife!

CLAUDINE. Please, Alfred, you know how I detest hearing you say such things!

COUNT. Why so? I'm not at all bitter.

CLAUDINE. Of coursè: you're a philosopher!

COUNT. I'm not a philosopher; only, as everyone in Paris knows of my wife's conduct, my assumed ignorance of the fact would be childish, and might even give rise to graver suspicions; to brag of it would be odious in the extreme; but to mention it before certain picked individuals, like you, and in a light and graceful manner—that's the only decent way for a man who knows well the exigencies of life. I think there's a splendid place to fill between Georges Dandin and Othello.

Meantime, Claudine has been living with Vétheuil, but of this Ruyseux knows nothing. One night Ruyseux and Vétheuil dine at Claudine's, and Ruyseux bids her good-by: he is leaving for Naples. This is the chance the lovers have been awaiting, and they determine to take advantage of the other's absence and spend the time at Fontainebleau. Claudine and her new lover, having spent some months together, come to the inevitable breaking-off, and the woman gives vent to her pent-up jealousy. Rather illogically Vétheuil says he wants his liberty; he is dissatisfied with their "false position," he says. Soon after, Claudine —sorry for her precipitancy in the scene in question— comes to him and implores him to forgive her, but he re-

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fuses, recognizing the fact that he is ruining himself. He cannot for the moment see her point of view. But this attitude is only temporary, for he cannot long remain obdurate before the manifold charms of his former mistress. Somewhat afraid of himself once more, he resolves to go away, and break off their idyllic union at its height, in Italy. Claudine has come to know that they are not eternal lovers, and wishes to preserve the memory of their past. Her daughter, too, will in the future demand more of her time and attention. In the fourth act they part.

VÉTHEUIL. Now, Claudine, please, not that! You're breaking my heart. Suppose, now, I do stay, could we live again that Paris life, having the same obstacles to overcome as before? With those same scenes over and over again? They would wear us out, bore us infinitely. You know very well, they would begin again the day we returned, and we know that they are simply the result of the conditions under which we try to live, under which we first met. Good Heavens, how often have we tried to be happy in spite of everything! And we were never able—we shouldn't be now if we tried again: we'd only end by hating each other, perhaps deceiving each other.

CLAUDINE. Oh, no, no!

VÉTHEUIL. Is that sort of existence possible? No, it would be a living hell, it would be the worst sort of life, especially after these weeks we've passed together, alone, so alone! We have been too happy, and we cannot find greater happiness; we've had a month of happiness which nothing can ever efface——

CLAUDINE. If it weren't for the idea of our separating——

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, but that thought kept our happiness in bounds, prevented it from becoming a sort of brilliant madness, gave it a tinge of melancholy. It was like the evening mist that enshrouds the mountains, softens their hard outlines, and makes their enormous mass things of infinite tenderness.

. . . . . .

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CLAUDINE. Then—this is the end—of everything——?

VÉTHEUIL. Listen, Claudine, let me tell you, let me——

CLAUDINE. What can you say to me? Something reasonable again? Don't you *feel* anything?

VÉTHEUIL. Claudine, that's not kind— If you only knew! I'm all broken up, too; I have a steep Calvary as well as you, but I say this must be, it must! It must!

CLAUDINE. Then I'll never see you again——!

VÉTHEUIL. Of course you will—I'll come back, later, after we're both cured.

CLAUDINE. Do you believe that?

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, we shall be cured. I'm not leaving you because you have deceived me, and you're not leaving me for a similar reason, nor are we tired of each other. There are none of the conventional lies between us nor the usual infamous tricks to envenom our love and wound us incurably: we are breaking off because you have your daughter and your friend, and we cannot be happy with those obstacles to overcome. We are saying good-by, but in what a marvelously beautiful land!

Vétheuil's carriage is ready, and the pair must separate.

COACHMAN. Excellency, it is ten-fifteen; we have just enough time to reach Locarno for the eleven o'clock train.

VÉTHEUIL. I'm coming immediately.

CLAUDINE. What did he say?

VÉTHEUIL. That it is ten-fifteen, and I had only time enough to be at Locarno at eleven.

CLAUDINE. Well—adieu! [*A long kiss.*] Let me look at you, Georges, Georges—you seem like a dying man! Go! Go! Don't say anything more to me! [*She falls on a bench, her head bowed low, and sobs. The bells of the carriage are heard tinkling in the distance, then are heard no more.*]

And thus ends the fourth act. Eighteen months later, Georges, who has been on an exploring party in the desert,

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returns and meets Claudine at a reception in Paris. It is as he had predicted: the intense fire of their passion has given way to quiet affection.

CLAUDINE. And now what are you going to do, here in Paris? You will be very much in demand; you will be fêted and asked everywhere; think of it, an explorer!

VÉTHEUIL. I've given up all that; you see, when one has lived eighteen months as I have, this Parisian life is no longer possible. . . . No, I'm going away again, I'm going to help colonize.

CLAUDINE. You're right, but it won't be very pleasant for you out there, all alone.

VÉTHEUIL. I sha'n't be all alone: I'm going to get married—the sister of one of my comrades on this expedition!

CLAUDINE. What? Why, you've hardly been back a week! You've made a very quick decision, haven't you?

VÉTHEUIL. I've known her for more than a month. When we were returning to France, she joined us at Saigon, and we came back together in the same boat.

CLAUDINE. Is she pretty?

VÉTHEUIL. Not as pretty as you.

CLAUDINE. Don't say that: in a few weeks you'll think her the prettiest of women. By the way, you must have a photograph of her with you?

VÉTHEUIL. I haven't.

CLAUDINE. Then show it to me. [*He shows her the photograph.*] You are right, she's not pretty, but she looks energetic and sweet. You see, dear, I don't feel at all jealous, looking at this picture, and if ever I meet the original, I shall kiss her with all my heart.

VÉTHEUIL. How good you are!

CLAUDINE. Life *is* funny; when I think how for months I never did anything but cry and think about you! . . . And now there you are telling me you are going to marry, and I have perfect control of myself, and am even glad to hear the news! . . .

VÉTHEUIL. What an adorable woman you are!

CLAUDINE. Of course! But then, I'm cured, you see!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, and all that had to be. . . .

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CLAUDINE. It was a real duty, and that's a great consolation—the only consolation, I think. [*A pause.*] Well, I too am going to get married.

VÉTHEUIL. Really?

CLAUDINE. Yes: a great many things have happened since you have been away.

VÉTHEUIL. I can well imagine.

CLAUDINE. The Comtesse de Ruyseux ran away with an officer a few weeks ago.

VÉTHEUIL. No?

CLAUDINE. Yes! Now Ruyseux considers himself free. . . . We're going to live in the country, on our estate, far from the city; we'll come to Paris only when Denise is eighteen.

VÉTHEUIL. Well, then, it's a pretty play: ends with two marriages.

CLAUDINE. Yes, but shall we be happy?

VÉTHEUIL. That's another story. . . . If we remained here in this city of trouble and suggestiveness, we who are the playthings of passion, we should be again tempted to have an adventure before the flame flickered for the last time. Towards forty, you would fall in love with a youth who would cause you great suffering, and break your heart for the last time——

CLAUDINE. Don't say that!

VÉTHEUIL. And I toward fifty, might fall in love with some child who would lead me a merry chase, and take me to new lands again!

CLAUDINE. *We* have seen enough!

VÉTHEUIL. Yes, and when one has lived, and observed, one arrives at a true philosophy of life, and says that at bottom of all this, happiness, or at least what most nearly approaches it, is always——

[*At this moment, interrupting* VÉTHEUIL *in the midst of his sentence, a Farandole, danced madly by a number of couples, rushes into the little salon, and in its whirlwind wake, sweeps out* VÉTHEUIL *and* CLAUDINE.]

This cold and summary account of *Amants* gives little enough of the spirit of the French, and the attempt but

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proves the extreme difficulty of conveying an adequate idea of its charm and grace. Its style and subject are so foreign to us that it is doubtful whether a translation, however well done, could reproduce the essentially French flavor of the original.

Conjugal infidelity, however jestingly touched upon in this and other Donnay plays, is not of prime interest in itself; it is merely an excuse, an incident round which the poet weaves his delicate web of sentiment and character analysis. In his Dedication to Molière (in *Le Ménage de Molière*) he says: "Reassure yourself, Monsieur, we of to-day are far from the old French *conteurs*, and their jokes on infidelity, which you yourself have often revived with so much *esprit*, or else complacently repeated. The conjugal accident no longer diverts us: it appears to us as a social necessity, yes, a shameful but logical consequence of marriage as it is most frequently practised in the society of our day." This attitude toward adultery as a "social necessity" is most typical of Donnay; his statement throws a great deal of light on his work. Marriage, fidelity, love, are his subjects, and the greatest of these is love. That is why, among other things, *Lovers* contains, as I have said, his philosophy par excellence.

Maurice Donnay was born in 1859 at Paris, of a well-to-do bourgeois family in the district of Montmartre, where the young Maurice was destined to make his artistic *début* not many years later. His predilection for literature was noted in his early school days, for his instructors at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and the Ecole Centrale made reference more than once in their reports to the "dreamy and contemplative" nature of the youth, which had many times marked him out as a "poet" among his schoolfellows. In accordance with the wishes of his ambitious parents, he prepared himself for the profession of civil engineer, and

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in 1885 he entered, somewhat unwillingly, a contractor's office. He was plainly not destined for the career which he had embraced; and six years later, after having become a regular contributor to the *Chat Noir* magazine, and as a direct result of his appearing in public and reciting his own verses in a cabaret on Montmartre, he was forced to resign his position. Between the years 1889 and 1891 he wrote and recited a number of graceful if occasionally vulgar and cynical "Saynètes," which were keenly appreciated by the habitués of the *Chat Noir*. In 1892 his first play, *Lysistrata,* was produced at the *Grand Théâtre;* it was at once successful, and attracted some notice. The story and the wit of the Aristophanic comedy appealed to the somewhat kindred spirit of the Frenchman, who utilized, however, only the principal outlines of the Greek play, and rounded it out with a generous infusion of his own Gallic wit. The next important play was his most successful and is certainly his most brilliant, and will doubtless remain his finest achievement, *Lovers.* Jules Lemaître, a great authority, a keen and conservative critic, pronounced this play "probably a masterpiece." He was speaking of the piece in its relation to French dramatic literature, not merely contemporaneous writing. The praise of critics and public soon lifted the young dramatist into the front rank, made way for further successes, and prepared a respectful hearing for everything he was destined to write.

La Douloureuse (1897)—an untranslatable expression of *argot,*—again delves into the eternal question. This time it is a woman's play. Again the dramatist tells us of the effect of passion on a human character, and the treatment here, considered with that in *Amants,* should give us a clear idea of Donnay's mind. "The principal underlying idea in Donnay's plays," says Roger Le Brun, the author of a little monograph on the dramatist, "is, in

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its essence, this: that love, as a result of social conventions, for the most part hypocritically disguised by a puerile sentimentality, is forced to do service for the basest appetites as well as the most artificial emotions; it is debased by lies, by tricks, by the avarice of Man, sidetracked from its true and proper functions, going hand in hand with all our misdeeds like a monstrous and vile thing." This debasement " by lies " is the theme of *La Douloureuse*. Donnay harks back a moment to Ibsen, when he shows us the unhappy result of a lie in the past. The story of this play is in itself of little importance: it is not well constructed or highly interesting, though the theme is significant. But the dramatist has written one superb act, the second. The closing scene leaves one with much the same feeling as that of the fourth act of *Amants;* that same longing, somewhat sentimental, that regret for happiness lost, but happiness to be regained, hangs heavy over this pair of lovers who are parting. He says, " Don't you too feel a great weight lifted; aren't you even happy? " And she replies, " Oh, yes, but I'm going to cry, all the same." And the curtain drops.

L'Affranchie (1898) treats the question of free love,—not very successfully, it is true; but it is again the characterization and the poetic atmosphere which place this work among the best of its author.

Georgette Lemeunier (1898), played by Réjane and Guitry, is the story of man and wife, the " victory of the wife over the caprices of the husband—a loyal victory, without the eternal ancient ruses common to womankind."

Le Torrent (1899) marks a radical departure in the " théâtre " of Donnay. This comes as near being a " thesis " play as any the author ever wrote: its theme is closely akin to that of several plays of Hervieu and Brieux. " The suicide of Valentine Lambert—an unfaith-

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ful husband, relieves him of the cowardly blame of his family for the crime of forcing motherhood on a woman, and constitutes a fearful condemnation of the terrible marriage law by which the male can take advantage of the most despotic means, and force his wife, by the exigencies of nature, to suffer the degrading lie of adultery."

The essential unity of Donnay's art cannot but suffer by combining with it the alloy of a collaborator, no matter how skilful or powerful that collaborator may be. Donnay twice collaborated with Lucien Descaves, and the resulting plays—*La Clairière* and *Oiseaux de Passage*—we cannot but feel, fall into a class much below *Amants* and *La Douleureuse*. The first of these is another thesis play, the other a Feminist tract, one in which the thesis is of more importance than the play itself. If Donnay survives, he will be known as the author of two or three charming and clever comedies of love, not as the champion of "self-realization" or woman's rights. The day of the thesis play seems to have passed, and the works of the present age must stand or fall according to art standards, not social or political. Donnay was evidently led to write these plays, together with *L'Autre Danger* (1903), by the spirit which pervaded the air; but he must soon have learned that he might well have left the work of reform to those who were better fitted to polemics, and allowed Brieux to write *La Femme seule,* an infinitely finer social document than any Donnay attempted to produce. Yet *L'Autre Danger,* by reason of its manifestly interesting theme and masterly development of the serious side of human character, must ever remain one of the author's finest achievements. *L'Autre Danger* is clearly a thesis play, and the thesis constitutes anything but a "pleasant" subject. A woman who gives her daughter to her own lover for a husband—that is not a pretty situation; but handled

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by Donnay it becomes a terrible and a painful one, and the terror and pity are made the more poignant as the dramatist has hesitated so long to attack the subject. During more than two acts—up to the middle of the third—the theme, or at least its direct application, does not become evident. It seems that the author, realizing the odiousness of the situation, occupied as much time as possible in preparing for the disagreeable but highly dramatic climax—and this climax, when it comes, is the more effective as it is unexpected, or rather not lengthily and laboriously prepared for. But once he starts, the wheels of action move at lightning speed, and hardly are we aware of what is happening, until it becomes a thing of the past. One critic, Antoine Benoist, thinks that Donnay was afraid of his subject and wished to be rid of its unpleasant side as soon as he was able; but as Donnay is above all a dramatist, and not a prude or a moralist, and since he wishes to make a striking effect and pile up as quickly as he could all his accumulated action, the retardation of the story in the first half of the play is wholly justifiable on the grounds that he was seeking a greater tension and a more crushing climax. It was to such apparent neglect of form as this that Lemaître made reference when he said that Donnay "among our young dramatists is one of the few whose works are the closest to actual life because of this very negligence of composition."

The plays immediately following the production of *Le Torrent*—the next work—are not of paramount importance. *La Bascule* (1901) and *Education de Prince* (1900) are, in the case of the first, a further study of the relations between man and wife, and, in the second, a rewriting of a bright and satirical series of dialogues.

Le Retour de Jérusalem (1903) is the most ambitious and detailed of the modern plays of Donnay. In it he

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attempted a problem: Is real intimacy, intellectual and physical, possible between members of two distinct races? But the universal application of that supposed problem is so difficult to determine, that the problem *per se,* is almost negligible. We must assume therefore that the author took a Jewess and a Gentile merely as types of radically different races, and studied them in and for themselves. In a long preface to the printed play, called forth by many acrimonious articles and much discussion, Donnay says that he intended to place before the public, with all due fairness, the bred-in-the-bone difference between Jew and Gentile. However this may be, he has succeeded in writing a play which shows very clearly the essential difference between one human being and another. This is a love story, as well as a psychological study.

The production of *Le Retour de Jérusalem* in America not long ago with one of the cleverest living actresses, Madame Simone, in the leading rôle, showed clearly the great gulf between French and American theatrical methods. Through scene after scene the play proceeds slowly, developing character; long speech after long speech brings the action to its far-off climax. The American public was not willing to listen to conversation, no matter how brilliant or how interesting. It demanded action. Donnay is a dramatist, but he is likewise a poet and a thinker; the French audience, probably the best trained in the world, is willing to listen to good dialogue for half an hour, provided it be well spoken—the American "moving-picture" audience demands movement, not talk.

The next two plays, *L'Escalade* and *Paraître* (1904 and 1906) do not merit special mention. The most interesting of the later plays is the only one in which the author went to the past for his subject-matter. For a number of years Donnay had been devoting a great deal of time

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to the study of Molière, upon whom he has contributed a large and authoritative volume, and in 1912 the Comédie Française produced *Le Ménage de Molière*. In this five-act verse play—Donnay has not forgotten his real gift for verse since the early Montmartre days!—he has rendered charming tribute to his compatriot, in the play itself as well as in the delicate and spirituel Dedication:

"I am taking the liberty, Monsieur, of writing to you, as I have taken a greater already, that of writing a comedy on your household, and I believe that in putting a man such as you upon the stage, some explanation, if not excuse, is due you. . . . It is ever an extremely hazardous proceeding to put upon the stage a person who has once actually lived. So far as you yourself are concerned, Monsieur, if we know you thoroughly as an author, fairly well as actor and manager, we are very uncertain when we tread on the ground of your private life.—Why do so, then, you may well ask? . . . I understand, but it is the fault of your first biographer, J.-L. Gallois, sieur de Grimarest. Yes, he began it: he recounts anecdotes, and gives us to understand that you did not get along so very well with Armande; he says either too much or not enough, thereby arousing our curiosity, which has not yet died down. That simple admirer is therefore the first author of the *Ménage de Molière*, unless it be yourself, as I shall attempt to demonstrate before long. . . . Above all, Monsieur, do not try to scent out any excuse on my part, any answer to my critics. . . . I am speaking to you, and to you only, as I owe an explanation only to the man who is the principal character in my play. . . . I dare to hope that you will discover in this comedy, Monsieur, the sincerest expression of tenderness for yourself and the profoundest admiration for your genius, just as, if the distance between us were not so great, I should allow myself to dedicate this play to you in person."

Donnay's latest play, *Les Eclaireuses* (1913), marks no appreciable departure from his former work: it is a love

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story, touching upon the question of Feminism at moments, but it is primarily a *drame du cœur*. With the usual clever and delightful dialogue, the expected scenes of sentiment, the poet recounts the history of an ill-matched couple, ending with the ultimate soul-mating of the woman. Man's laws, his obstinate refusal to look facts in the face, woman's revolt and her final readjustment—there is nothing new in all this; but then Donnay believes that there is no new material, and has successfully proved it.

PLAYS PRODUCED:

Lysistrata	1892	
Pension de Famille	1894	(Family Hotel)
Amants	1895	(Lovers)
La Douloureuse	1897	(The Sad Woman)
L'Affranchie	1898	(The Emancipated Woman)
Georgette Lemeunier	1898	
Le Torrent	1899	(The Torrent)
Education de Prince	1900	(A Prince's Education)
La Clairière (in collaboration with L. Descaves)	1900	(The Clearing)
La Bascule	1901	(The Seesaw)
L'Autre Danger	1902	(The Other Danger)
Le Retour de Jérusalem	1903	(The Return from Jerusalem)
L'Escalade	1904	(The Escalade)
Oiseaux de Passage (in collaboration with L. Descaves)	1904	(Birds of Passage)
Paraître	1906	(To Appear)
La Patronne	1908	(The Patroness.—Untranslatable in its colloquial use.)
Le Ménage de Molière	1912	
Les Eclaireuses	1913	(The Women Scouts)

(During the season of 1912-13, Madame Simone appeared in the United States in Mr. Owen Johnson's adaptation of *The Return from Jerusalem.*)

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THE PRINCE D'AUREC

A Comedy in Three Acts

By

HENRI LAVEDAN

Translated by

BARRETT H. CLARK

Presented for the first time at Paris, in the Théâtre du Vaudeville, June 1, 1892

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PERSONS REPRESENTED

THE PRINCE D'AUREC
BARON DE HORN
VISCOUNT DE MONTREJEAU
PAUL MONTADE
MARQUIS DE CHAMBERSAC
SORBIER
THE COUNT DE GANÇAY
BARON DE BERTAMONT
MARQUIS DE FRAYSIÈRES
BERTIN
DUTAILLIS
STULBACH
LOUIS
JOSEPH
A SERVANT

THE PRINCESS D'AUREC
DUCHESS DE TALAIS
COUNTESS DE GANÇAY
BARONESS DE BERTAMONT
VISCOUNTESS DE SAINTE-PATRICE
MADEMOISELLE DE SAINTE-PATRICE
MADAME DE SERQUIGNY
MADEMOISELLE DE SERQUIGNY

The scene is laid in Paris at the present day.

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THE PRINCE D'AUREC

ACT I.

[*In the hôtel of the* PRINCE D'AUREC.—*A large drawing-room in an old mansion, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The furniture is in the style of Louis XIV. To the right, above the fireplace, is a magnificent portrait of Louis XIV. The doors are composed of a number of mirrors, divided into panels; there are three at the back, one to the right, one to the left. Downstage to the right there is a sofa placed at an angle, its back to the audience; at the back also to the right is a sofa by the side of a small table; a desk and a chair.*

As the curtain rises two servants in livery with knee-breeches, together with M. STULBACH, *are discovered.*]

STULBACH. [*To the servants, angrily.*] I'm not going! Go and tell M. Bertin, your steward, that I've been waiting here for an hour, I, Monsieur Stulbach the coachmaker!

JOSEPH. But I tell you M. Bertin cannot possibly see you!

LOUIS. He is conferring with the decorators.

STULBACH. He will see me; do as I tell you.

JOSEPH. [*To* LOUIS.] Monsieur is excited; go to M. Bertin and let us have peace.

LOUIS. [*To* STULBACH.] One moment! [LOUIS *goes out.*]

STULBACH. [*Walking back and forth.*] What a house! I've had enough of trifling here this last year from the Prince and his household!

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JOSEPH. [*Trying to soothe him.*] Come, come, no personalities! That's not our affair! We're not to blame!

STULBACH. I want what's owing to me!

JOSEPH. Of course; but you're not at all reasonable. You know very well that to-day is no time to ask for your money: we have a fancy-dress ball this evening, and we have no time to think of anything else.

STULBACH. What's that to me?

JOSEPH. Fifteen hundred invitations! The Queen of Sardinia is coming!

STULBACH. She owes me for two landaus.

JOSEPH. In that case, you had better make a fuss with her. That would be wiser.

STULBACH. Don't worry, I'm going there too.

[*Enter* LOUIS.

LOUIS. M. Bertin regrets, but he is busy looking after the placing of the throne.

STULBACH. What throne?

LOUIS. For the Queen of Sardinia.

JOSEPH. What did I tell you?

LOUIS. He is quite unable to see you.

STULBACH. Then I must see the Prince!

LOUIS. The Prince is not at home; he is driving the "Eclair," the coach from Robinson.[1]

STULBACH. I'll wait for him.

JOSEPH. No, no; come back next week. That will be much wiser, I assure you.

STULBACH. Yes—yes—well, you may tell the Prince I am going to file suit!

LOUIS. Very well: file!

JOSEPH. It would not be the first time.

[STULBACH *goes out.*

JOSEPH. [*In an undertone, to* LOUIS.] This old house doesn't seem very secure!

[1] A fashionable restaurant near Paris.

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LOUIS. Yes! The Prince owes everybody.

JOSEPH. And the Princess too; I know the dressmakers are continually dunning her. I know!

LOUIS. Well, why should they economize? They have no children!

JOSEPH. That makes no difference: little parties like this to-night must cost a neat sum!

LOUIS. But if he doesn't pay——?

JOSEPH. The Prince gambles, every night; the stakes are getting higher and higher!

LOUIS. What luck?

JOSEPH. Vile!

LOUIS. How can he manage to get along, the way he throws his money away?

JOSEPH. [*With meaning.*] Friends——

LOUIS. M. Paul Montade?

JOSEPH. No, he's a writer—a man of letters, they call him. Those people never have a sou. I'm speaking of some one else: that millionaire Jew.

LOUIS. The Baron de Horn, who's always around Madame?

JOSEPH. He must be supplying the necessary.

LOUIS. A Jew? You're joking!

[*Enter* BERTIN, *with some papers in his hand.*

BERTIN. Has Stulbach gone?

JOSEPH. Just this moment. He said he was going to file suit.

BERTIN. Let him! I have a handful of summonses; this ball sends them in in droves: bootmaker, tailor, jeweler, florist— [*To the servants.*] Have you been to Beiloir's?

LOUIS. Yes.

BERTIN. Good.—The Prince will be back any minute. Go away, you shouldn't be here—and don't let any one in —no creditors! [*The servants go out.* BERTIN *looks over*

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the papers which he carries.] A Duke de Talais, Prince d'Aurec! I really don't know where to hide my head! Well, I shall be obliged to let his mother know about it. [LOUIS *reappears on the threshold.*] What do you want now?

LOUIS. M. Dutaillis, reporter from "L'Instantané." [1]

BERTIN. Tell him to come in. [LOUIS *goes out. Enter* DUTAILLIS.]

DUTAILLIS. How are you, M. Bertin? I am in a great hurry!

BERTIN. Not so great as I. Have you come to see the Prince?

DUTAILLIS. No: his wife. But why do you say the Prince? Shouldn't he be called the Duke de Talais since his father's death?

BERTIN. Doubtless he ought, but has preferred to keep his title of Prince d'Aurec. You know his motto? "As I please."

DUTAILLIS. He lives up to it!

BERTIN. One moment, please, I shall let the Princess know you are here. [*He turns to go.*]

[*Enter the* PRINCESS, *not noticing* DUTAILLIS.

PRINCESS. Has my husband come in yet, Bertin?

BERTIN. Not yet, Madame. [*Indicating* DUTAILLIS, *whom she notices for the first time.*] M. Dutaillis.

PRINCESS. [*To* DUTAILLIS.] From "L'Instantané"; now I place you! Have you come for the names and so forth? Tell me. [BERTIN *goes out.*]

DUTAILLIS. You were good enough to grant me permission, Princess——

PRINCESS. Oh, we are old acquaintances! I have not forgotten that you were the first to interview me on the occasion of my marriage, three years ago.

[1] The Snapshot.

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DUTAILLIS. I had the honor at that time to be the only reporter on all the papers to publish *in extenso* your entire lingerie. I was then only a very obscure young reporter——

PRINCESS. My trousseau gave you a start in the newspaper world. Now, what do you want?

DUTAILLIS. Your costumes for this evening's ball, and those of your guests.

PRINCESS. The Prince will appear as the Constable d'Aurec, I as Marion Delorme.

DUTAILLIS. And the Duchess de Talais?

PRINCESS. My mother-in-law as Madame de Maintenon. You may interview her if you like.

DUTAILLIS. Doesn't she live with you?

PRINCESS. No, she lives in the Rue de Varennes; for further details, you may see Bertin. When may I have the proofs of your article?

DUTAILLIS. After dinner.

PRINCESS. Very well.—Oh, I should like to have two places at the trial to-morrow.

DUTAILLIS. You shall have the tickets in an hour.

PRINCESS. May I leave before the court adjourns?

DUTAILLIS. Of course.

PRINCESS. You see I am going to hear Father Bonaventure at the chapel of the Gesu at four o'clock.—Next Thursday I am giving a little intimate dinner for twenty-two; I'll send you the names; say something nice about my dressmaker.

DUTAILLIS. Who is she?

PRINCESS. Monsieur Camille.

DUTAILLIS. I'll run along now, I'm very busy. I have to go to the Papal Embassy, Tattersall's, the Bureau Monarchique, and the Morgue, all before dinner!

PRINCESS. Good luck to you!

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[DUTAILLIS *goes out, as* BERTIN *and the* PRINCE *come in, through the same door.*]

PRINCE. [*To* BERTIN, *who hands him a packet of papers.*] No, no! Once more I tell you to leave me, and don't speak of that again!

BERTIN. But, Prince, this is the third time that M. Stulbach——

PRINCE. M. Stulbach bores me, and so do you. Leave me now! I am in no mood to think about my tradespeople to-day! Go! [BERTIN *goes out.*] Upon my word, we shall soon not be able to be at peace in our own house! [*To his wife.*] Good morning!

PRINCESS. What is the matter? Have you been to Robinson?

PRINCE. Yes, I am just off the box. I'm very much troubled.

PRINCESS. Did you run into anything?

PRINCE. Whom do you take me for? No, it's another matter. Whom were you with when I just came in?

PRINCESS. A young reporter, from "L'Instantané."

PRINCE. Did he ask you anything about me?

PRINCESS. No.

PRINCE. Did he say anything about last night, at the club?

PRINCESS. Nothing. [*Looking straight at the* PRINCE.] I can guess: you've lost again?

PRINCE. A little.

PRINCESS. How much?

PRINCE. Four hundred.

PRINCESS. Thousand?

PRINCE. Of course! Not four hundred francs!

PRINCESS. My congratulations, dear!

PRINCE. Don't mention it!

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PRINCESS. Well, I think you might have chosen a better time to lose so much!

PRINCE. Why?

PRINCESS. Because I myself am very short for the time being, and I was just about to ask you for a rather large sum.

PRINCE. Ah, this is just the day!

PRINCESS. I suppose my demand is very *mal à propos!*

PRINCE. It is; I am sorry. Now you understand how impossible it is for me to help you.—What's the trouble? Dressmakers? They can wait.

PRINCESS. Never mind, let's not speak about it. Tell me, who won all that from you?

PRINCE. The Prince of Suabia.

PRINCESS. It is a very expensive luxury to play with a Crown Prince!

PRINCE. Twenty thousand louis! It is a good deal. So you are not surprised to see me a little nervous?

PRINCESS. Nervous? You seem to me astonishingly calm.

PRINCE. I drove my coach as usual this morning, for after all—*noblesse oblige!* It was rather pleasant, the horses were well in hand; no sun, no dust: perfect English weather! Only, I'm rather tired from loss of sleep—and the ball this evening seems rather too much.

PRINCESS. At least you'll not play to-night.

PRINCE. No, worse luck. I might have recouped myself.

PRINCESS. At this rate, you will ruin us altogether! Then how will you live? Will you be a coachman, or give lessons on the horn?

PRINCE. That might pay me better than being a Bachelor of Science, like my steward Bertin.

PRINCESS. Let us count up your dead; in three years,

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since our marriage, you have already consumed two uncles——

PRINCE. My grandfather, my aunt, the Canoness,——

PRINCESS. And one alive: me!

PRINCE. That's true.

PRINCESS. But I sha'n't blame you for squandering my dowry; I despise money.

PRINCE. So do I!

PRINCESS. But really it is high time you stopped, because I know some one who will make you if you don't.

PRINCE. Who?

PRINCESS. Your mother.

PRINCE. Oh, the poor Duchess! She will give me whatever I want.

PRINCESS. Do you believe that?

PRINCE. She's already let me have quite a fortune!

PRINCESS. Do you intend to turn to her for the four hundred thousand?

PRINCE. I do: to-morrow.

PRINCESS. And do you think she will give them to you?

PRINCE. I do: she adores me.

PRINCESS. That is no valid reason.

PRINCE. You fail to do justice to my mother; you misjudge her.

PRINCESS. [*Ironically.*] Heaven keep me from that! [*She laughs.*]

PRINCE. I know what you think about her: she lacks distinction.

PRINCESS. You agree to that?

PRINCE. Well—she is not of our class. It is all very well for her to believe that her blood is as good as yours or mine simply because my father made her a duchess. She is a Piédoux, my dear, daughter of the famous manufacturer of automatic churns, Aristide Piédoux——

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PRINCESS. "Will not rust. Vastly superior to the American machines. First prize at the Philadelphia Exposition," according to the prospectus.

PRINCE. Ah, yes, yes, but what a splendid, whole-hearted woman she is! I pity the person who speaks evil of me in her presence—of me, her prince! Why, not a day passes that I don't joke with her about her romantic ideas, her old-fashioned notions; of course, she tries to defend herself, but she only thinks better of me for it, and when she uses her favorite little phrase, "Dominique, what a paradoxical soul you are!" she is really very proud of me. I know her as well as if I had brought her into the world. Every time she is angry or excited, it is I who finally bring her around. She is obstinate, determined, prejudiced, but she simply cannot resist me!

PRINCESS. She managed to hold her own with your father!

PRINCE. She was quite right in preventing her husband from spending all her money. She was a provident and far-seeing mother. You see, she was thinking of me. And then, my father was not his son!

PRINCESS. Very well, dear; by all means go to the Duchess, if you have so much confidence in her! Nothing could please me better!

PRINCE. That's the only way—the only good way—out of the difficulty. Do you know of any other?

PRINCESS. Oh, I——

PRINCE. We can't get away from the fact that the debt must be paid by this time to-morrow. The Prince of Suabia is very close-fisted, and he allows no trifling in gambling matters. What then? Of course, I could, if the worst comes to the worst, sell the sword, the famous sword of my forefather the Constable.

PRINCESS. [*Ironically.*] For all the good it does you!

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PRINCE. Chambersac offered me a hundred and thirty thousand francs for it.

PRINCESS. Chambersac, the Marquis?

PRINCE. Yes, there is only one. He wants it for the Cowley collection in London.

PRINCESS. The Marquis plies a fine trade, doesn't he?

PRINCE. He is a man of experience—and expedients.

PRINCESS. He makes his living by it. When did he make you this offer?

PRINCE. Last month. Family heirlooms like that are not picked up in the streets every day! But what good would it do me to sell it? That wouldn't solve the difficulty! It would be hardly worth our while.

PRINCESS. And your mother would go into hysterics if she heard of such a thing.

PRINCE. She would not hear of it. Then there is De Horn——

PRINCESS. [*Hiding with difficulty the slightest shade of nervousness.*] The Baron?

PRINCE. Yes, I once had an idea of turning to him, but I thought it over. Now I have nothing against Jews, but——

PRINCESS. You are not like your mother: she can't bear them!

PRINCE. I believe them to be very clever and capable people, who sometimes equal us Christians——

PRINCESS. And sometimes surpass us.

PRINCE. But I do not believe we should allow them to get the upper hand. I object to borrowing from De Horn —because he would be sure to let me have the money, and afterwards take advantage of me.

PRINCESS. How?

PRINCE. He has two absurd ideas about which he has sounded me once or twice already. Think of it, he wants

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to go into partnership with me in some shooting grounds, and then—don't laugh—he wants me to introduce him at the club!

PRINCESS. He goes rather far!

PRINCE. As I am firmly decided not to do either of these things, no matter how amiable the Baron is, I shall not put myself under any obligation to him.

PRINCESS. You are perfectly right.

PRINCE. To go back to what I was saying, I have thought of everything, but my mother is the only practicable solution. She has paid my debts three times already, and she will pay them a fourth.

PRINCESS. Very possibly.

PRINCE. You'll see!

[*Enter* JOSEPH.

JOSEPH. [*Announcing.*] Monsieur le vicomte de Montrejeau.

[JOSEPH *goes out.*

PRINCE. [*To his wife.*] Your cousin! What a bore! Since he arrived, the day before yesterday, I haven't had a moment's peace! I'm sorry we asked him to stay with us!

PRINCESS. We couldn't very well let a relative, an old friend, stop at the hotel, could we?

PRINCE. I'm going. [*He starts to leave.*]

[*Enter* MONTREJEAU, *intercepting the* PRINCE.

MONTREJEAU. Don't leave. I'm in trouble. I'm stuck!

PRINCE. What's the matter?

MONTREJEAU. The Pavane.[1]

PRINCE. Well?

MONTREJEAU. It's not going well. I've just come from the rehearsal—most depressed. Bertamont can't keep step.

[1] An old French dance; in England it was called "Pavan."—TR.

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The others do fairly well—that's not all! They lack—sst! Fire—that's the trouble!

PRINCESS. They were doing very nicely yesterday. Aren't you expecting too much of them?

MONTREJEAU. But this is a Pavane, you see! They don't get into the spirit of *the* Pavane! This is what we've decided: they will all dress in a hurry, and then after dinner try it over once more, and see whether— [*To the* PRINCESS.] Do you mind? [*To the* PRINCE.] Do you?

PRINCE. Not in the least. But where?

PRINCESS. Here, in this room: we've reserved it for our own use.

MONTREJEAU. Perfect! I'm so busy with this Pavane! My poor dear friends, I've come expressly for this party from Nantes—given up my usual habits, broken in upon the routine of my daily life, everything—just for this! The moment I heard you were giving a ball—whissht—telegram announcing the happy news, "You may announce that Pavane will be organized and conducted by Viscount de Montrejeau." Now it must be a huge success, it must be talked about later, it must be the essence of all that is best in the genus Pavane—a thing of beauty, that will last—ah, life is hard!

PRINCESS. Now, don't go on like that, Jojo.

MONTREJEAU. How can I help it? I always feel very deeply. I'd give a great deal to be twenty-four hours older!

PRINCE. [*Troubled.*] So would I!

MONTREJEAU. *He* understands me: he's a true friend!

[MONTREJEAU *rises and shakes the* PRINCE *by the hand. Enter* JOSEPH.]

JOSEPH. [*Announcing.*] The Baron de Horn. Monsieur Paul Montade. [JOSEPH *goes out.*]

PRINCE. [*Rising.*] So soon!

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MONTREJEAU. [*Going to the* PRINCESS.] Are they going to dine here?

PRINCESS. Yes, with my mother-in-law.

MONTREJEAU. Then we're late!

PRINCESS. Wait until I introduce you!

[*Enter* MONTADE.

MONTADE. Princess——!

[*Enter* DE HORN.

DE HORN. Are we too early?

PRINCESS. Not in the least. [*Introducing.*] The Viscount de Montrejeau, my cousin——

PRINCE. Arrived the day before yesterday from Nantes, especially to conduct the Pavane this evening!

PRINCESS. Monsieur le Baron de Horn—Monsieur Paul Montade, the well-known novelist.

MONTREJEAU. [*To* DE HORN, *whom he mistakes for* MONTADE.] Read you often, Monsieur—in the train. Very pretty style! And——

DE HORN. [*Indicating* MONTADE.] You are mistaken, there is M. Montade!

MONTREJEAU. I beg your pardon.—What's the news on the Bourse?

DE HORN. [*With an evasive gesture.*] They say—that we must all make a living!

MONTREJEAU. [*Carefully.*] Yes—the life of a financier must be very enthralling—you get the fever— [DE HORN *nods his head in affirmation of* MONTREJEAU'S *words, and walks off.* MONTREJEAU *then turns to* MONTADE, *who has come to him.*] Oh! Read you often, Monsieur,—in the train. Very pretty style. Have you anything in hand now?

MONTADE. Yes, another novel.

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MONTREJEAU. What subject?

MONTADE. Society.

MONTREJEAU. I see. You're going to—the lash of satire?

MONTADE. Oh, no, no satire: only the lash.

MONTREJEAU. Ah, Juvenal!

PRINCESS. [*Aside to* DE HORN.] I was going to write: I have something to talk to you about.

PRINCE. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] Do you realize, Montrejeau, that it's past six?

MONTREJEAU. [*To* MONTADE *and the* BARON.] Beg pardon! White tie!

DE HORN. [*To the* PRINCE.] You may leave us if you like: we are in delightful company. [*He points to the* PRINCESS.]

JOSEPH. [*At the door.*] The armorer from the Cluny Museum has come to try on the cuirass of the Prince.

MONTREJEAU. Ha! Ha! The cuirass! Tournament! Charming period!

PRINCE. [*Bored.*] I'll see him— [JOSEPH *goes out; the* PRINCE *follows him.*]

MONTREJEAU. [*Bowing to everybody.*] Ta-ta! [*He goes out.*]

PRINCESS. Ta-ta, Jojo!

DE HORN. [*To the* PRINCESS.] I didn't know you had a cousin in the provinces.

MONTADE. He seems very intelligent!

PRINCESS. Oh, my cousin is not a genius, but when he dances he is very *distingué*. Now instead of making ironical remarks, do look at those illustrations for a moment while I talk with the Baron.

MONTADE. [*Going to the opposite end of the room, towards a table heaped with books.*] Secrets, in my presence? [*To* DE HORN.] My dear man, I shall be jealous!

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PRINCESS. That would be very wrong of you! I have merely a question of finance to ask of the Baron. I am going to ask him to buy some Turkish bonds for me.

MONTADE. I guessed it. [*He turns over the leaves of a book.*]

PRINCESS. [*To* MONTADE.] Do you wish anything else?

MONTADE. I only like the Epinal chromos. [*He looks at a picture in one of the books.*] Here's a pretty one!

DE HORN. What is it?

MONTADE. [*Reading the title on the page.*] The quarter of an hour of Rabelais![1]

PRINCESS. [*To* MONTADE.] Leave us in peace, please! [*To* DE HORN, *confidentially.*] Now! [*She stops.*] No, I hardly dare!

DE HORN. Tell me, please.

PRINCESS. Once more I must take advantage of your friendly offer.

DE HORN. It is a standing offer and will always remain such.

PRINCESS. I am very, very grateful to you.

DE HORN. Let us leave gratitude out of the question. Now what is it?

PRINCESS. You guess already, don't you? I am just now very——

DE HORN. I understand.

PRINCESS. You must listen to me; you must know that——

DE HORN. Never mind. [*He turns round, sits by the small table, draws a check-book from his pocket, takes a pen, makes out a check, gives it to the* PRINCESS, *and points to a place on it.*] You have only to insert the figure

[1] A common expression relative to the time when a person pays a bill. The reference is to an incident in the life of Rabelais.—TR.

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there: the check is signed. [*He gives her the check-book.*]

PRINCESS. [*Taking the check-book and playing mechanically with it.*] But, really, I'm too—I'm taking advantage——

DE HORN. Very well!

PRINCESS. But, I——

DE HORN. Tell me!

PRINCESS. What confidence I have in you!

DE HORN. It could not be better placed!

PRINCESS. [*Puts the check-book in her pocket and rises. To* MONTADE.] Montade, I give you the Baron again.

MONTADE. I was getting along very well without him!

PRINCESS. I'll see you presently! [*She goes out quickly.*]

MONTADE. [*Approaching the* BARON, *smiling, as if to show that he "knew something"!*] Well, how are you coming on?

DE HORN. What do you mean?

MONTADE. [*Looking toward the door through which the* PRINCESS *has just gone.*] Turkish bonds!

DE HORN. I don't understand.

MONTADE. Oh, come now! Don't try to hide anything from me! I'm not blind!

DE HORN. Monsieur is a psychologist, is he not?

MONTADE. There are worse professions!

DE HORN. What are you not blind to?

MONTADE. You won't be angry if I tell you?

DE HORN. I am never angry.

MONTADE. So much the worse.

DE HORN. It's a matter of principle. Tell me!

MONTADE. You are getting along very nicely in this family.

DE HORN. Not better than you.

MONTADE. Oh, yes! But, for that matter, our cases are

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different: I am a celebrity, I am invited out as a matter of course. But it is not a matter of course that a man like you—who comes of an eminently practical race—should have private conversations with a woman like the Princess, and take out of his pocket a little volume that resembles a check-book! [*Negative gesture from* DE HORN.] There must be something behind all this when the Baron de Horn, one of our most hard-headed millionaires, a leader, although young, among the Hebrew financiers, lets himself in for such elegant and refined little chats before dinner!

DE HORN. Well?

MONTADE. And as that something else is one of the most charming and desirable little women in Paris, why, my dear fellow, I wish you all the luck in the world!

DE HORN. I assure you——

MONTADE. Oh, no, no, no—don't explain! Only, I don't know just why: I should be careful about the Prince and Princess. [*The* BARON *pays strict attention to these words.*] I have an idea that this family's intentions in regard to you are not of the most disinterested, and you are running the risk of being fooled if you don't play your cards with extreme care——

DE HORN. I have never yet been fooled!

MONTADE. You and I are not what might be termed close friends, but in the interest of psychology I think I ought to warn you of possible danger. Now, let's say nothing more about it!

DE HORN. You are very kind! But you may rest assured I shall never be fooled by these people, Monsieur Novelist. I know them too well for that!

MONTADE. Not as well as I. They don't love us!

DE HORN. They despise us; me for my money, you for your ability. These people are our born enemies; no

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peace is possible between us. They tolerate us, but never for an instant do they admit us to be their equals. We are a race apart; the same blood does not flow in our veins.

MONTADE. We are like higher servants to them. I am happy to see that we can converse on a basis of mutual understanding. But if they despise us—and they do—why do they receive us in their circle?

DE HORN. First, because we force our way, but, above all, because they are afraid of us. They are afraid of us as they are afraid of what is unknown, of the future. I inspire fear by reason of the millions I have in my pocket, you by the qualities you have in your mind. You see, the impudence of their affected courtesy, the carefully guarded degree to which they extend their friendship, their attitude of patronage, their formal manner of shaking hands —it all shows that they can never pardon us for obliging them to accept us. It is sometimes said that their *hauteur* is only a form of timidity, their rudeness, absent-mindedness. Well, I shall believe that when I have once seen them amiably absent-minded! What are they good for nowadays? What do they care for art, literature, science? They support nothing but horse-racing and horse-shows. If they were able they would put a stop to everything. They are useless, vain, frivolous, irritable: they form a totally artificial and isolated class in the society of to-day: luxurious and rotten to the core! They now quietly decompose amid the splendor and show of their past. To-morrow they will have ceased to exist!

MONTADE. Far be it from me to defend them! I don't want to, nor am I bound to, but really, between you and me, you exaggerate. There are among them, if you know where to look, people who still possess the old-fashioned honor and fidelity.

DE HORN. Very possibly: in the provinces!

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MONTADE. In Paris, too.

DE HORN. Very few: they are rare exceptions. We are too prone to make generalizations from the exception. A courtesan may have fine qualities, but how many of those ladies whom we have known were like Dumas's heroine? And as for the gentlemen who have done something in the world; do they owe their achievements to the age and the influence of their family names? No, they are simply men, into whom one day fell the divine spark, and for one Duke who was a brilliant statesman and one Viscount who was a great thinker, consider the unending line of titled idiots! As a whole, the aristocracy of to-day is in the last stages of decay. There is not a shadow of a doubt! They are nothing—they have nothing left!

MONTADE. But there is a little natural pride in knowing who your ancestors were during the past six or seven hundred years!

DE HORN. But what is the good of that?

MONTADE. They have the satisfaction of perpetuating the family name. They are seven hundred years old: that is their merit.

DE HORN. Their only one. But so are we seven hundred years old, as far as that goes, or even older! Your ancestors and mine might well have fallen at Crécy. We merely have no means of telling. The nobility have those things inscribed on a scrap of paper.

MONTADE. That is everything. It is a great satisfaction to me, for instance, to know that seven hundred years ago, my ancestors went about in rags, bare-footed, scratching the arid soil of the Middle Ages, while I, the descendant of those outcasts, may hold my head high, and can write my thoughts and have them printed!

DE HORN. And my ancestors seven hundred years ago! Worse than outcasts! They lived in filth, the objects of

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fierce hatred; they were driven out of the towns at the sword's point like lepers! A Jewess, who was enceinte and had to cross a bridge, paid the same toll as swine. But the times have changed, and now *we* are the kings: we are the true aristocrats. They—ha!—they are appropriately called descendants! As we rise, they sink! Proofs? Everywhere! There, on the table! [*He picks up a book at hazard.*] "Rules for the Game of Poker."

MONTADE. [*Picking up another book.*] "Thirty Calls on the Horn," collected by the Baron de X. . . .

DE HORN. [*Taking another.*] "The Mail-coach in Paris." And in this house, what do we find? A Prince aged thirty-four, good for nothing on earth——

MONTADE. Capable of everything——

DE HORN. A perverted mind, heart and feelings like dry tobacco. There's the Princess, a pretty doll, to whom you may say anything, but to whom I happen to be making love, with the certitude, I admit, of her being mine! What else? Jojo, the cousin from the provinces, the grandson of a Chouan [1]——

MONTADE. Let's say nothing more about them!

DE HORN. In this noble family the only one who is worth anything is the Duchess, and she's a fool. There's nothing of a real Duchess in her, she was born a Piédoux! There's nothing to them at all! They don't even try to protect their caste system. They are exempted from public office, driven out of every place where useful people are needed! And do they stir a finger in revolt, even for the sake of form? Have they even sulked, as their fathers did for fifteen years during the July Monarchy? No, you don't know them! They paint their faces and dress up in the costumes of the past!—"What are you wearing?—

[1] The Royalists in the Vendean war were so-called because they imitated the call of the "Chouan"—the owl.—TR.

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Who are you?—La Môle! And you?—Coconas."[1] They deserve the famous tirade of the Marquis de Presle[2]: "Do you know why——?"

MONTADE. [*Continuing.*] Jean-François d'Aurec went to Palestine?

DE HORN. Why the Constable——?

MONTADE. Why this one, and that—and so forth? It was in order that——

DE HORN. This young lord might drive the coach to Robinson, make free with his friend's purse, ruin himself, and then hold high his own head and his ancestor's sword at a fancy-dress ball! Ah, I *don't* like them!

MONTADE. I understand that. But why do you appear to enjoy their company, why do you come here?

DE HORN. Oh, I have a purpose.

MONTADE. Very well! Here they come! Silence!

[*Enter the* DUCHESS, *the* PRINCESS, *and* MONTREJEAU.

DUCHESS. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] I haven't seen you since my son's wedding, Monsieur de Montrejeau, and yet I should have recognized you a league away! My memory is good for faces, places, and titles! [MONTADE *and* DE HORN *come and bow to the* DUCHESS.] You know, Messieurs, don't you, that the Viscount is related to us through his great aunt Brimont-Laudun, daughter of the Laudun who was esquire to Madame la Dauphine?

MONTADE. [*Aside.*] She's off again!

DUCHESS. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] Where are you stopping?

MONTREJEAU. Here.

PRINCESS. We gave him the red room.

[1] La Môle and Coconas: characters in Dumas' "Vingt Ans Après."

[2] A character in Augier and Sandeau's "Le Gendre de M. Poirier."

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DUCHESS. The king's chamber! The one I always use when I come to stay with my son. Louis XIV once slept there! Louis XIV is a perfect idol of mine. [*To* MONTADE *and* DE HORN.] Yours, too, isn't he?

[MONTADE *and* DE HORN *bow in affirmation.*

MONTREJEAU. The Great Monarch! Five o'clock with Molière!

MONTADE. [*Pointing to the large portrait.*] There he is!

MONTREJEAU. [*Looking at the picture.*] Poor man!

DUCHESS. Why poor man?

MONTREJEAU. What a mane! To think he had to wear that all his life!

DUCHESS. Do you think it's ridiculous?

MONTREJEAU. Not at all: quite the reverse!

DUCHESS. Who are you this evening, Monsieur Montade?

MONTADE. Pierrot, Madame la duchesse — merely Pierrot.

DUCHESS. Why don't you take a historical costume— Du Guesclin, for instance?

MONTADE. I never thought of that; I'll try it some other time.

DUCHESS. And you, Baron?

PRINCESS. De Horn is a Rajah this evening, covered with diamonds. I've heard you can't look at his costume: it's as bright as the sun!

MONTREJEAU. [*Attempting a joke.*] Get out of my sunlight![1]

DUCHESS. They say the diamonds cost a million. Is that true?

DE HORN. No, Duchess: three.

[1] Diogenes' reply to Alexander when he was asked what favor he should like from the great general.

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DUCHESS. [*Stiffly.*] My compliments! There is not a woman of the aristocracy who can boast of so many.

DE HORN. That's true. But my diamonds are not family jewels; they are like me, *parvenus.*

DUCHESS. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] And you, Montrejeau?

MONTREJEAU. First I thought I'd appear as a Chouan, with hat and cockade, representing Grandfather's last heroic days! La Vendée—Bocage—and all that!—but I thought it might be too painful! And those Chouans—they were not very—Pavane! So, sst! I changed!

MONTADE. And what is it now?

MONTREJEAU. Duke d'Epernon—simple Epernon!

DUCHESS. Delicious!

MONTADE. Fits you like a glove!

PRINCESS. But, Mother, tell the gentlemen——

DE HORN. Yes, Duchess, we're very anxious to hear——

MONTREJEAU. Oh, very!

DUCHESS. It's nothing so extraordinary: my dressmaker suggested Catherine de Médicis.

MONTADE. Oh!

DUCHESS. Not nice, was it? She's so unsympathetic! So I chose Madame de Maintenon!

DE HORN. Happy choice!

MONTREJEAU. [*Pointing to the portrait.*] For his sake?

DUCHESS. Possibly!

[*Enter the* PRINCE, *in evening dress.*

PRINCE. Whew!

DUCHESS. What is it, Dominique? You don't look well?

PRINCE. The armorer nearly killed me fitting on the irons.

DUCHESS. [*Shocked.*] Irons? The Constable's suit of armor!

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PRINCE. Yes, irons—I'm half dead! Then all those people hammering about: electricians and gardeners—! The whole place turned upside-down—I wish the ball were over!

DUCHESS. I don't.

PRINCESS. How frivolous, Mother! If Madame de Maintenon heard you——?

DUCHESS. So much the worse for her! Oh, the party is going to be magnificent!

PRINCE. Too many people!

DUCHESS. Not at all!

PRINCESS. Oh, yes: fifteen hundred invitations!

PRINCE. [*To the* DUCHESS.] It's your fault! If we had listened to my mother, we should have invited all the nobility of the provinces!

MONTREJEAU. Quite as good as that of Paris!

DUCHESS. I should have had no objection. We have only too rarely an opportunity to gather together and make friends among ourselves. Thanks to this ball, we shall have all the aristocracy together at once! And then, the tradespeople were complaining of dull times!

MONTADE. That is their business—they always complain.

DUCHESS. The Republican Press criticizes us for closing our salons to outsiders; this time they have no cause for complaint!

PRINCESS. You're mistaken, the Republican Press will always have something to say.

PRINCE. Well, it will be perfectly right!

DUCHESS. Dominique!

PRINCE. Because we are playing the fool in our little *faubourg*, and by this time we ought to uphold the government. Little Marianne [1] is charming, eh?

[1] The Republic is sometimes jokingly spoken of as "Marianne."

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PRINCESS. We must keep up with the times!

DUCHESS. We—Republicans? What are you thinking of?

PRINCE. The Pope himself is!

DUCHESS. You forget, my son: that you are the godson of the Count de Chambord!

MONTREJEAU. So am I!

PRINCE. There are innumerable hordes of his godsons: two thousand at least!

DUCHESS. Please, do not continue!

PRINCE. Very well! If you can't take a joke——!

DUCHESS. There are certain forms of levity which I cannot tolerate! [*To* DE HORN *and* MONTADE.] Perhaps you did not know that side of him. He persists in attacking my most cherished beliefs—the king, the clergy, the white flag——

PRINCE. I attack nothing: there are times when I venerate the king, the pope, the princes, everything that is emblazoned, crowned——

DE HORN. Uncrowned!

PRINCE. Likewise. I regret that Louis XVI was beheaded.

DUCHESS. Regret?

PRINCE. And that lately the good Jesuit fathers who educated me so well, and made me what I am, have been removed! But I see nothing tragic in it, as my mother does.

DUCHESS. I am broad-minded: I don't think it tragic!

PRINCESS. Don't defend yourself: you are monarchy personified.

PRINCE. You read nothing but the *Gazette de France;* every spurious Marie-Antoinette escritoire you see you buy; you believe in Louis XVII, and your favorite flower is the *fleur-de-lys!*

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PRINCESS. He's jealous because he can't wear one in his button-hole!

PRINCE. You're too gullible! And, for your trouble, I have found for you a coat-of-arms: Jupiter's thigh on a field of azure, with the motto, "It really happened."

DUCHESS. I don't understand.

PRINCE. You think everything "really happened!" The doors are all closed, so we may speak out: nothing has happened, my dear Mother! The Crusades—Richard Cœur-de-Lion—"Burning fever"—"Open, 'tis the fortune of France!"—"Hang thyself, brave Crillon"—"There are no Pyrenees!"—"Messieurs les anglais!"[1] They are all a fairy-tale, that never happened. They are only catch-words of the past!

DUCHESS. My boy, Henry IV and the Sunday chicken——[2]

PRINCE. Nonsense— You read those things in books, see them in pictures, hear them at the opera——

MONTREJEAU. By Jove!

DUCHESS. I won't listen to another word!

PRINCE. People speak of them as they speak of Homer, Roland, Blue-Beard, and Puss-in-Boots, but they don't exist! Some fine morning we'll all wake up and find that the glorious history of France is only a dream!

[1] A mélange of famous historical allusions and quotations. The "burning fever" is from an aria in the opera "Richard Cœur-de-Lion"; "Open, 'tis the fortune of France!" is attributed to Philip VI of Valois, after his defeat at Crécy by the English; "Hang thyself, brave Crillon," to Henri IV; "There are no Pyrenees" to Louis XIV when the Duke of Anjou was crowned King of Spain; "Messieurs les anglais" was addressed to the English at Fontenoy, meaning that they should fire the first shot.

[2] Henri IV said that he wished the country to be so prosperous that every inhabitant would be rich enough to afford a "poule au pot"—or boiled chicken—every week. The Prince's reply is quite untranslatable; his makes a pun on the word "canard"—duck—which also means an exaggeration.

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DE HORN. Answer him, Duchess!

DUCHESS. I can't! He takes my breath away! Ah, Dominique, what a paradoxical soul you are!

PRINCE. [*Aside, to his wife.*] There! You hear?

PRINCESS. "Hit the target every time! Can't miss!"

PRINCE. Not I!

[*Enter a servant.*

SERVANT. Dinner is served!

[*All rise. The* PRINCESS, *in passing the small desk near which the* BARON *is standing, leaves the check-book on it, unperceived by the others. The* BARON *takes it.*]

PRINCESS. [*Going close to her husband.*] I don't think you were at all tactful with your mother!

PRINCE. You'll see, she will pay a good round sum to bring me back into the fold!

DE HORN. [*Opens the cover of the check-book before putting it into his pocket, sees the figure written in it, raises his eyebrows, and says aside:*] Two hundred thousand! I begin to have hope! [*Going to the* DUCHESS *and offering her his arm.*] Duchess!

[DE HORN *and the* DUCHESS, *together with the rest of the company, pass out into the dining-room.*]

DUCHESS. The day the king comes riding into Paris——

PRINCE. He will soon be on foot again!

Curtain.

ACT II.

[*The scene is the same as in the first act.—The folding-doors at the back open upon a circular balcony which permits a view of a large room beyond, brilliantly lighted. On the balcony are stools, small chairs, and various musical instruments: violas, 'cellos, bass-viols, etc.*

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As the curtain rises the MARQUIS DE CHAMBERSAC, *the* VISCOUNT DE MONTREJEAU, *and* MONTADE *are discovered.* CHAMBERSAC *is dressed in a court uniform of the Second Empire,* MONTADE *as Pierrot, and* MONTREJEAU *as the Duke d'Epernon.*]

MONTREJEAU. [*To* CHAMBERSAC.] Four hundred thousand last night, you say?

CHAMBERSAC. To the Prince of Suabia.

MONTREJEAU. Diavolo! In any event, the Duchess seems to know nothing about it: after dinner, she went direct to her rooms.

MONTADE. To metamorphose herself into the Great Monarch's morganatic spouse!

MONTREJEAU. She was gay as a lark.

CHAMBERSAC. You may be sure she will not long remain ignorant of the state of affairs.

MONTREJEAU. [*Showing uneasiness.*] And my dancers not here yet!

MONTADE. They are coming: dry your tears! [*To* CHAMBERSAC.] How does the Prince carry it off?

CHAMBERSAC. Finely.

MONTREJEAU. He has plenty of courage.

CHAMBERSAC. Nerve!

MONTREJEAU. Same thing.

CHAMBERSAC. In the provinces, not here!

MONTADE. [*To* CHAMBERSAC.] Do you think our friend can pay?

CHAMBERSAC. I wonder? He has only one resource: the Duchess.

MONTADE. And what if she refuses?

CHAMBERSAC. Then he'll have to scrape around, and empty his pockets. I can always help him to the extent of a hundred and thirty thousand.

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MONTREJEAU. I'm glad to hear it! You're a friend worth having!

CHAMBERSAC. Don't make fun of me! I can't afford to loan money to any one—except at high interest. I am offering the Prince a hundred and thirty thousand for his sword——

MONTREJEAU. The Constable's sword?

CHAMBERSAC. Of course; I have a number of commissions for it.

MONTREJEAU. But my cousin refuses to sell it, I hope?

CHAMBERSAC. So far, yes. He is wrong.

MONTREJEAU. That depends.

CHAMBERSAC. What's the matter? You seem to be surprised that I should—engage in business—like a tradesman—with my noble name——?

MONTREJEAU. Yes and no.

CHAMBERSAC. [*Patronizing him.*] Young man!

MONTADE. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] It's not difficult to see that you don't live in Paris!

CHAMBERSAC. I carry on a number of other business affairs; ask Monsieur! [*Pointing to* MONTADE.]

MONTADE. That's true.

CHAMBERSAC. Are you scandalized? What can a nobleman do nowadays when he is without a sou, except die of starvation—which he has a perfect right to do—or make use of his native talent and go into business? Some do painting and sculpture——

MONTADE. But they never sell their work for money.

CHAMBERSAC. Others drive carriages and shoot pigeons; some, who have the knack of language, go into literature, but they're in a minority.

MONTADE. Fortunately!

CHAMBERSAC. But I don't paint, I'm not a sculptor, and I don't compose operas to be performed in private—I have

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no talent—except for business, and that I develop, thanking Providence for having given to a bachelor marquis, a useless fellow like me, destined to ruin and damnation, the common sense and ordinary gifts which are necessary to a tradesman! I believe that to-day commerce is the only field in which my talents are of any use—I can do great things! If M. de Talleyrand were limping through life to-day, he would without the shadow of a doubt go into business, and he would be perfectly justified in so doing! Now I haven't the genius of the Prince de Bénévent,[1] so I work in a very limited field: where I was born—and I do a very thriving little business in many ways. I ferret out those little gifts which form the basis of——

MONTADE. Friendship?

CHAMBERSAC. If you like! I sell family jewels, or buy them, I effect exchanges, I search out titles to nobility—that have hitherto escaped notice; pay cash for historic swords and wipe out gambling debts. I carry on these affairs in perfect good taste, without discussion and argument, as people of my station should.

MONTADE. And you get along very well!

CHAMBERSAC. The moral side I have to handle with infinite tact and the utmost discretion. Think of it: I untangle the most knotted problems, smooth over all sorts of difficulties! Ah, the tears I have been witness of in my time——!

MONTADE. And you dry them——?

CHAMBERSAC. Not always!

MONTREJEAU. [*Aside.*] The old brigand!

CHAMBERSAC. Then I act as artistic adviser to parvenu and inartistic millionaires; I give them the benefit of my skilled sense of what is fitting, I give the furnishers and decorators beautiful ideas, for which they pay me hand-

[1] Talleyrand.

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somely—and find a way not to lose on their commission themselves! In short, I am Chambersac; the unique Chambersac, *the* Marquis, as if there were only one in France, who might well put on his card: "Regent of style, Arbiter of fashion, Professor of toilette."

MONTREJEAU. [*Holding out his hand to him.*] You are a real gentleman; shake hands!

MONTADE. [*Aside.*] A fine one, too!

MONTREJEAU. [*Seeing the ladies enter.*] Ah!

[*Enter the* COUNT *and* COUNTESS DE GANÇAY, *the* BARON *and* BARONESS DE BERTAMONT. *They wear costumes of the time of Henri III.*]

MME. DE BERTAMONT. [*Very gay. She holds the hand of* MADAME DE GANÇAY.] Ladies of the court of Henri III!

MME. DE GANÇAY. [*Indicating her husband and* M. DE BERTAMONT.] And their playthings!

M. DE GANÇAY. What a comparison!

MME. DE BERTAMONT. [*Dancing a few steps of the Pavane.*] Look!

MME. DE GANÇAY. [*Also dancing.*] How are we?

CHAMBERSAC. Like two Clouet portraits.

MONTADE. Ah, ladies!

MONTREJEAU. [*Nervously.*] We haven't a moment for trifling now. Let's admire ourselves later! [*Clapping his hands.*] Bertamont, get them in place!

[*The musicians come in at the back and take their places on the balcony over the large room.*]

M. DE GANÇAY. I don't see the Prince and Princess.

MONTREJEAU. They're just putting the finishing touches to their costumes. Come, now!

MME. DE GANÇAY. [*To* MONTADE.] I think you're very fetching! Do you dress like that often at home?

MONTADE. Every time I expect Columbine!

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M. DE BERTAMONT. [*To his wife, aside.*] Really, don't I look ridiculous in these tights?

MME. DE BERTAMONT. Not in the least!

M. DE BERTAMONT. I feel as if I had nothing on.

MME. DE BERTAMONT. It's because you aren't used to it, dear.

M. DE GANÇAY. [*Impatiently.*] Is your Pavane going to be danced this year or next?

MONTREJEAU. [*Regretfully.*] We're not all here!

CHAMBERSAC. If you need me, I'll act as dummy?

MME. DE BERTAMONT. We need Madame de Saint-Patrice.

[*Enter* MADAME *and* MADEMOISELLE DE SAINT-PATRICE.

MME. DE SAINT-PATRICE. Here I am! Fraysières is coming, too!

[*Enter the* MARQUIS DE FRAYSIÈRES.

M. DE FRAYSIÈRES. Present!

[*Enter* MADAME *and* MADEMOISELLE DE SERQUIGNY.

MME. DE GANÇAY. Madame de Serquigny.

MONTREJEAU. [*To those who have just entered.*] We were only waiting for you!

MME. DE GANÇAY. [*To* MME. DE SERQUIGNY.] Your daughter is lovely!

M. DE FRAYSIÈRES. [*To* MLLE. DE SERQUIGNY, *aside.*] Mademoiselle——

MME. DE SERQUIGNY. [*To* MME. DE GANÇAY.] You think so? She'll make a charming house-wife. I'm counting on this ball——

MME. DE GANÇAY. To marry her?

MME. DE SERQUIGNY. Better than myself, if possible!

M. DE FRAYSIÈRES. [*To* MLLE. DE SERQUIGNY.] I put

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a louis for you on *Vol-au-Vent* yesterday, as you told me. Here is the sixty francs you won.

[*He gives her the money without being seen.*

MLLE. DE SERQUIGNY. What luck!

MONTREJEAU. Take your places! We'll gossip later! Ladies, gentlemen, Mademoiselle—musicians! Clear the floor, those who are not in the dance! Now, keep well in mind, the Pavane is the noble dance *par excellence.* Dance for pleasure if you will, but remain elegant and dignified. Don't forget that! Now remember, at the end of the Pavane, each gentleman kisses his partner; the kiss must be light, evanescent. [*He imitates the kiss by smacking his lips.*] So light! Now, glide! Every one understand?

MONTADE. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] A child could.

[*Every one is in place, ready for the dance.*

MONTREJEAU. Good! [*To the musicians.*] Musicians, one, two, three—glide!

[*They begin the Pavane. It is danced by eight persons; the couples are divided as follows: the* COUNT DE GANÇAY *and the* BARONESS DE BERTAMONT; *the* BARON DE BERTAMONT *and the* COUNTESS DE GANÇAY; MONTREJEAU *and* MADAME DE SAINT-PATRICE; *the* MARQUIS DE FRAYSIÈRES *and* MADEMOISELLE DE SERQUIGNY. *The following conversation takes place during the dance, while the dancers are laughing and joking.*]

M. DE GANÇAY. Look at Bertamont, the way his foot sticks out!

MONTREJEAU. Silence! Monsieur de Bertamont is not in step!

M. DE BERTAMONT. The musicians insist on going ahead of me!

MONTREJEAU. [*To* M. DE BERTAMONT.] Catch up, then. Mme. de Bertamont, you are not keeping step.

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MME. DE BERTAMONT. Monsieur de Gançay's fault!

M. DE GANÇAY. Mine?

MME. DE BERTAMONT. He's telling me naughty stories!

M. DE GANÇAY. Oh, Madame!

MME. DE GANÇAY. [*To* MME. DE BERTAMONT.] Forgive him: his bite is not as bad as his bark!

MONTREJEAU. [*Stopping the dance.*] We can't work while all this is going on!

ALL. We'll be still!—There, now!—Pardon us!

MONTREJEAU. Very well, then! Just a word, now that we've stopped. [*Taking a violin from one of the musicians.*] Gentlemen, Maestro, please! [*To the dancers.*] You are all very nice, but you haven't the dance yet! You lack—color! You, Bertamont, [*singing and playing the violin*], yours is no Pavane! On the tips of the toes, not flat-footed! What do you mean? There! As if you were on velvet!—Good! [*Returning the violin.*] Now let us try over again—this is absolutely the last time, I warn you! Ready——!

[*He raises his arm, and the musicians recommence. The dancers begin again in silence.* CHAMBERSAC *and* MONTADE *are seated near each other, by the table to the left.* CHAMBERSAC *is looking at a piece of paper which he holds in his hand.*]

MONTADE. [*Leaning over toward* CHAMBERSAC.] What are you reading?

CHAMBERSAC. A list of the guests that was lying about. Look, the Princess de Larmor is the Queen of Sheba.

MONTADE. Is she the one who had that disgraceful trial?

CHAMBERSAC. She took my advice on it, and won her case. Superb shoulders!—The Marquis de Précignac as Charles I.

MONTADE. Is he the officer?

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CHAMBERSAC. His brother. He's in business; director of the Submarine Credit. Clever fellow!

MONTADE. [*Also reading the list.*] Landerbourg as a clown of the Middle Ages.

CHAMBERSAC. Oh, the little Prince de Glaive as Punch.

MONTADE. Black costume, I presume?

CHAMBERSAC. Why black?

MONTADE. His grandmother died three weeks ago!

CHAMBERSAC. You're malicious!

MONTADE. No, I'm not. I'm simply having a capital time. I'm taking notes on everything. I am the soul of kindness.

CHAMBERSAC. You're as good as a man of letters can be!

[*The Pavane draws to a close.*

MONTREJEAU. Lightly, lightly, now—Bravo! There is the real Pavane! Exudes the spirit of nobility! Dance it like that before the Queen, and watch the effect! We shall be the sensation of the ball!

[*Enter the* PRINCE, *as the Constable (but without the cuirass, which a servant carries); the* PRINCESS, *as Marion Delorme; and* DE HORN.]

PRINCESS. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] Well, Jojo, are you satisfied with your dancers?

MONTREJEAU. I am easier; the dance will be a success.

PRINCE. [*To the servant.*] Put it there. [*The servant goes out.*]

PRINCESS. Ladies, gentlemen! How are you, Montade? Chambersac!

CHAMBERSAC. [*Kissing her hand.*] To whom have I the honor to do obeisance?

PRINCESS. Let me tell you: I was born in 1612—at Châlons or Blois, it is not certain which. I was celebrated

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during half of a great century; among my personal friends were Cinq-Mars, Saint-Evrement, Buckingham, Grammont, the great Condé, Richelieu, and Louis XIII. Each loved me in a different way: I loved them all alike. Then I was mysteriously eclipsed, so that no historian has ever been able to find out the date of my death. Sometimes I return; this evening it is my pleasure to appear before you on the arm of the Constable d'Aurec. Good my lords, and fair ladies, welcome in your midst Marion Delorme!

CHAMBERSAC. Spoken like a queen!

PRINCESS. That is because I have reigned.

MONTREJEAU. [*To* M. DE BERTAMONT.] Come forward! [*He takes* DE BERTAMONT *in a corner to show him something about the dance.*]

MONTADE. [*To the* PRINCE.] You are superb, too. You really give the impression of the Constable!

MME. DE SAINT-PATRICE. Are you going to put on your helmet and cuirass to receive the guests?

PRINCE. Alas, yes!

MME. DE SAINT-PATRICE. [*Picking up the helmet.*] Oh, it's heavy!

PRINCE. [*Showing it to her in detail.*] One of my ancestors wore it at the siege of Brescia; the plume is gone.

MME. DE SAINT-PATRICE. In battle?

PRINCE. No, in a house-moving!

MONTADE. [*Pointing to the sword.*] There's the famous sword!

PRINCE. [*Drawing it from the scabbard.*] The historic razor!

MONTREJEAU. [*Still with* DE BERTAMONT.] Bend from the knee—you're not bending at all!

M. DE BERTAMONT. [*Out of humor.*] I've been doing that for the last ten minutes! You're too particular!

MONTADE. [*Taking the sword from the hands of the*

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PRINCE.] Poor sword! [*Every one listens to him.*] Don't you see something lamentably sad in all these jewels and fleurs-de-lys? I can hardly keep from saying, as I look at this blade——

PRINCE. [*Taking back the sword.*] No "copy" now, please!

MME. DE BERTAMONT. [*Disappointed.*] Oh, Prince, he was going to say something charming!

PRINCESS. Don't worry: we'll find it all in his next novel!

PRINCE. Nothing is lost with him. [*Brandishing his sword, then looking at it.*] These great sabers—these historic weapons, you know—[*he puts it quickly back in the scabbard*]—are out of date—they are not carried any longer.

MONTADE. Oh, yes, they are: to the auction room!

[*Enter* JOSEPH, *right.*

JOSEPH. I have been sent to say that the rooms are now lighted.

[*He goes out.*

M. DE BERTAMONT. Shall we go?

MME. DE SAINT-PATRICE. Let us take a look!

M. DE BERTAMONT. [*Preparing, like the rest, to leave.*] One moment! Look!

[*He points to the door through which* DE HORN, *as a Rajah, covered with diamonds, now enters.*]

MONTADE. Monsieur de Horn!

PRINCESS. Marvelous!

MME. DE BERTAMONT. Oh, what a splendid Rajah!

CHAMBERSAC. Just back from India!

MLLE. DE SAINT-PATRICE. Who is the dazzler?

M. DE BERTAMONT. The Baron de Horn!

MME. DE SAINT-PATRICE. The man with so much money?

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PRINCESS. [*To the* BARON.] Your entrance somehow lacked effect; a Rajah like you should have come on an elephant.

MLLE. DE SAINT-PATRICE. A white one!

DE HORN. I left him in the cloak-room.

[*Everybody except the* PRINCE, PRINCESS, *and* DE HORN *goes out.*]

MONTREJEAU. [*As he goes out with* DE GANÇAY.] Too much jewelry!

M. DE BERTAMONT. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] Are you sure his teeth aren't set with diamonds?

DE HORN. [*To the* PRINCESS.] Aren't you going with them?

PRINCESS. [*As she sits down.*] I'm tired; I shall be standing long enough later on.

DE HORN. I came through the galleries downstairs: beautifully arranged!

PRINCE. Chambersac looked after that.—I'm in splendid humor to-night!

PRINCESS. You'll be late if you don't hurry!

PRINCE. That's true. There's that cuirass, that ancestral strong-box! I tell you it is anything but easy to put the thing on!

PRINCESS. Courage!

DE HORN. Your ancestors didn't mind a little thing like that!

PRINCE. They had nothing else to do then! [*He goes out.*]

PRINCESS. [*After a pause, extending her hand to* DE HORN.] Thank you. You acted as tactfully as a great lord.

DE HORN. As a friend, merely.

PRINCESS. If Dominique had not been so unlucky at play these last three months, I——

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DE HORN. I know.

PRINCESS. I should never have had to go to strangers——

DE HORN. Never mind that!

PRINCESS. But I always insist on paying my debts: in a year's time I shall no longer be your debtor.

DE HORN. I regret it.

PRINCESS. Oh! [*Delicately.*] Notice that I did not say I should not be infinitely obliged to you!

DE HORN. Those words are worth all the money I have loaned you. But really I am your debtor—yours and the Prince's—especially yours!

PRINCESS. In what way?

DE HORN. In what way? During the past two years I have risen considerably in the world.

PRINCESS. Two years, you say?

DE HORN. Yes, Princess.

PRINCESS. How quickly time passes when one is idle!

DE HORN. I remember clearly the circumstances under which I first met your husband.

PRINCESS. I don't remember!

DE HORN. It was at a ball given by the d'Amboises. I had just arrived from a long visit in Portugal. At that time I had very little to do with the best Parisian society.

PRINCESS. Since then you've made up for lost time!

DE HORN. Thanks to you! As I was looking on at the dance I heard a voice behind me: "A Jew, this Monsieur de Horn?"—"A good Jew!"—"Is that ribbon he's wearing the Legion of Honor?"—"No, it's the Order of the Christ!"—"Ah!" said another, and then they all laughed. So did I. I turned round to see the author of the joke; I asked who he was, and was told: the Prince d'Aurec!

PRINCESS. I'm so sorry! How impertinent of him!

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DE HORN. I can appreciate a good joke, when it is really clever, and that one was. Five minutes later, I obtained an introduction to him; your husband was charming——

PRINCESS. Now I remember——!

DE HORN. And that, Princess, was the beginning of our friendship.

PRINCESS. I should have preferred another. You weren't too offended at what the Prince said?

DE HORN. Not in the least. The best way to success in this old world is never to be offended.

PRINCESS. But I really don't see how we have been of any service to you—or even how our hospitality——?

DE HORN. One moment: I'm coming to that. You received me, a man who was not of your race nor of your rank; you treated me as a social equal, in public——

PRINCESS. All mankind are brothers, Monsieur.

DE HORN. In the New Testament, not in the salon! I am not joking: you have shown great courage in receiving me as you have, in spite of the prejudices of society. You have opened—at least wide enough for me to enter—doors which, without your assistance, I should never have been able to pass through——

PRINCESS. Nor will they be the last. I know your wishes in regard to the club.

DE HORN. Oh, Princess! Yes, I can say with perfect frankness, you have raised me to your level, and definitely "placed" me. Before I knew you I was an ordinary banker, one of fifty in Paris; to-day I appear before the world as an aristocrat, a man of birth, simply because I sit at your table. I am deeply obliged, Princess, and very glad to have this occasion to tell you how I appreciate all you have seen fit to do for me!

PRINCESS. Not so much, after all! If our relations with

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you have helped you, I am only too happy to see that you are at least not ungrateful.

DE HORN. Oh, please——!

PRINCESS. I am! *You* have been of great service to *me;* I shall never forget.

DE HORN. Never?

PRINCESS. Do you want me to say it again?

DE HORN. Never is a great deal. I don't ask that much. I ask you to remember it—some day!

PRINCESS. What day?

DE HORN. I shall tell you.

PRINCESS. [*Aside.*] I have been too grateful! [*To* DE HORN, *playfully.*] Now, Monsieur le rajah, if you wish our relations to continue, you must swear one thing to me.

DE HORN. Swear by what?

PRINCESS. What you hold most dear, according to the formula.

DE HORN. Then I swear by——

PRINCESS. Your diamonds?

DE HORN. Very well! Now what shall I swear?

PRINCESS. Swear first.

DE HORN. *Juro.*

PRINCESS. Not to make love to me.

DE HORN. I don't swear it.

PRINCESS. Why?

DE HORN. I want immediately what is denied me. For that reason I have sworn never to go into a museum; the moment I see a sign "Do not touch!" I do touch!

PRINCESS. But this isn't a museum!

DE HORN. That is so, yet I can't help thinking that I'm at the Louvre.

PRINCESS. Then you will not swear what I asked you to?

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DE HORN. An oath at a fancy-dress ball? What's that? I should never abide by it. Then it has never been so difficult as this evening! You are too beautiful!

PRINCESS. Then I have some hope for the other days!

DE HORN. Don't be too confident!

PRINCESS. You are right, we should never be too confident. You magnificent Hindoo, you have changed a great deal the last few minutes. You're so gallant and chivalrous, and the way you talk to me——!

DE HORN. I am speaking to Marion!

PRINCESS. Then I understand. Well, take care that Marion doesn't take offense at what is said to the Princess d'Aurec!

DE HORN. I have no fear. The Princess d'Aurec belongs to the Rajah! [*Enter the* PRINCE.

PRINCE. [*Wearing his cuirass.*] The hero of 1523! I have at last succeeded in getting into my diver's suit. [*He hands some papers to his wife.*] Here are the proofs of the article on the ball for to-morrow's "L'Instantané."

PRINCESS. [*Taking the proofs. To* DE HORN *before she reads them:*] Excuse me?

DE HORN. [*To the* PRINCE.] Aren't you very uncomfortable in that armor?

PRINCE. No. Of course, I couldn't go bicycle-riding, but I can move about fairly well. I could very easily manage to cut the cards! Nine, ten, your play! Very easily! [*To his wife.*] Any errors?

PRINCESS. No. Here's the part about us [*reading*]: "As the Princess d'Aurec entered the ballroom all heads were turned toward one of the most charming young ladies of the French aristocracy; her sparkling appearance and fresh beauty were further heightened by the costume she wore, that of Marion Delorme." Quite exact! "At her side the Prince, her husband, was dressed to represent the

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Constable; he wore the helmet, cuirass, and sword of his forefather Guzman d'Aurec. The Prince presented an exceedingly magnificent figure quite in harmony with the dignified spirit that is everywhere manifest in his ancient and honorable house."

PRINCE. [*Flattered.*] *Not bad!* [*Fastening the buckle of his garter.*] Very good, in fact!

PRINCESS. Listen to the rest: "Not far from the Prince and Princess is distinguished the dignified figure of the Duchess de Talais as Madame de Maintenon. The clever yet simple and unpretentious Duchess gave the impression of a Largillière portrait which had come down from its frame and walked."

PRINCE. [*In an undertone, smiling slightly.*] Poor Mother!

[*The* DUCHESS *enters quickly. She is dressed as Madame de Maintenon, with a high coiffure, covered with lace.*]

DUCHESS. [*To the* PRINCE.] Dominique, I must see you at once! [*To* DE HORN.] Please excuse me, Monsieur!

DE HORN. Certainly.

DUCHESS. My daughter-in-law will accompany you.

PRINCESS. [*To the* DUCHESS.] Don't you want me, either?

PRINCE. It seems not!

PRINCESS. Very well: I'll go.

PRINCE. [*Aside to his wife.*] I think my mother knows!

PRINCESS. [*Aside to her husband.*] She seems to. Oh, she will give you your four hundred thousand! Ha!

PRINCE. You seem amused!

DE HORN. [*Aside.*] There'll be a scene! [*To the* DUCHESS.] Duchess!

[*The* PRINCESS *and* DE HORN *go out.*

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PRINCE. Now, tell me——

DUCHESS. I know all: the four hundred thousand francs you lost last night, the condition this house is in, all the money you owe—everything! Tell me now I don't!

PRINCE. There is a great deal of truth in what you say; there is much exaggeration.

DUCHESS. Nothing is exaggerated: I have reliable information.

PRINCE. From whom, if you please?

DUCHESS. From one who is in a position to know: Bertin.

PRINCE. [*With a sneer.*] Bertin! He is your spy, isn't he? [*He rises and rings the bell.*]

DUCHESS. Who has done his duty in telling me. He has just been to my house.

PRINCE. He might just as well have stayed there! The idea! The——!

DUCHESS. I hope you won't say anything to him? He is a good, faithful man——

PRINCE. I can very well dispense with his services, as you shall see! [*Enter* BERTIN.] Ah, it's you, Monsieur! You've done a trick for my mother that I don't like at all! I discharge you!

DUCHESS. Dominique!

PRINCE. [*To* BERTIN.] That will do.

BERTIN. Very well, Prince.

DUCHESS. I engage you at once, Bertin.

BERTIN. Very well, Madame la duchesse. [*He goes out.*]

DUCHESS. What a brutal thing to do! You shouldn't have done that!

PRINCE. I should do it again!

DUCHESS. I know: you always do that! But this time

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things are going to be a little different from what they have been in the past——

PRINCE. [*Jokingly.*] I'm no longer a child!

DUCHESS. But I am always your mother, as you will soon see! Listen to what I've come to tell you.

PRINCE. [*Impatiently.*] No, no, Mother!

DUCHESS. You refuse to listen?

PRINCE. Of course I refuse. This is no time—! I'm giving a ball—here I am in my helmet. Look at you, too: Guzman d'Aurec being lectured by the Widow Scarron![1] Ridiculous!

DUCHESS. Why is it ridiculous? What is so ridiculous in carrying the helmet and sword of a Constable, of the Constable who was the glory and honor of our name——?

PRINCE. Oh, leave the poor Constable in peace, please! What has he to do with the matter in hand?

DUCHESS. Nothing, I am sorry to say. But you have, and the matter is serious. Do you realize your situation at this moment?

PRINCE. At this moment we should be receiving our guests.

DUCHESS. Think of your situation.

PRINCE. It's ridiculous.

DUCHESS. It's terrible!

PRINCE. Then you want a scene? You must have one? Very well, begin. Let us talk business, and be brief!

DUCHESS. Very well! I must however go back a few years. [*The* PRINCE *sighs.*] Why are you sighing?

PRINCE. Go ahead, go ahead!

DUCHESS. Never fear! I sha'n't go far back. When I was married——

PRINCE. Come at once to the deluge!

[1] Madame de Maintenon was at one time the wife of the writer Scarron.

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DUCHESS. What do you mean?

PRINCE. Nothing.

DUCHESS. Probably something impertinent! But I'm used to you. When I married, at the age of nineteen, I had a large fortune. The day I lost your poor father you were very young, you never knew in what a state his affairs were! My dowry I arranged so that my husband might use it, in spite of my family's objections——

PRINCE. This is really a very painful subject to me. Don't talk about it!

DUCHESS. Not as painful as it is to me. Of a dowry of fifteen millions, only three remain.

PRINCE. That's a very fair sum!

DUCHESS. With the remaining three millions——

PRINCE. Yes, I know everything: acting on the advice of M. Sorbier, a lawyer and friend of your father's, you placed me in a boarding-school at Angers, you yourself lived not far away, at Récigny, and there by means of strict economy you were enabled to mend the family fortunes a little——

DUCHESS. During twelve years, and by all sorts of privations.

PRINCE. Well? What about it?

DUCHESS. Listen, and you will know. You thought fit to remain idle while you were supposed to be studying, you couldn't even pass your first degree while ordinary farmers' sons——

PRINCE. I beg your pardon: I passed the written examination.[1]

DUCHESS. And were refused three times in the oral. When you left college you lived the life of most young men: did nothing from the age of eighteen to thirty, and cost me eleven hundred thousand francs!

[1] A written examination must first be passed, then an oral.

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PRINCE. Now——

DUCHESS. Not a sou less: I have the accounts in my books. At thirty, thanks to me, you met the grand-niece of the Duke de Richelieu, Thérèse de Varaucourt, whom you married. It was a superb match! I thought at that time you would settle down! Nothing of the sort: you gambled as before, every single night, and in two years' time and less you have squandered your wife's dowry and your own personal fortune of a hundred thousand francs a year! Then after you had lost all your own money you begged me for more, making all sorts of fine promises.—" I promise you never to touch another card!" I was foolish enough to believe you; for the third time, I paid your debts, and for the third time you ruined yourself. Now you owe money to usurers, upholsterers, coachmakers, florists, bakers, and butchers!

PRINCE. Let us leave these tradespeople out of the discussion!

DUCHESS. You owe more than two hundred thousand francs, and last night at the Jockey Club you lost four hundred thousand to the Prince of Suabia. You're in a pretty situation! Well, take my word for it, I'm done with you! You need expect nothing further from me; I shall not pay a single sou!

PRINCE. Not a single sou; good! Is that all? I should like to dance! [*He starts to go.*]

DUCHESS. [*Calling him back.*] Dominique!

PRINCE. Yes?

DUCHESS. What else have you to say to me?

PRINCE. What else can I say? You are absolutely right; if I were in your place, I should do precisely as you are doing. [*Again he starts to go.*]

DUCHESS. My poor boy, what can you do?

PRINCE. I know!

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DUCHESS. More than six hundred thousand! What will you do?

PRINCE. I'll see to that!

DUCHESS. You have money, then?

PRINCE. I have nothing!

DUCHESS. What, then?

PRINCE. I can find some.

DUCHESS. Where? How?

PRINCE. You need have no fear!

DUCHESS. But I have a right to know; I am your mother! How will you get the money? I ought to know; I insist on knowing! Do you realize that the blood of the Talais is in your veins?

PRINCE. Blood like any one else's.

DUCHESS. No, Monsieur, it is the blood of your d'Aurec ancestors, of Marshal de Talais who was killed at Denain, of your two grandmothers who were guillotined in '93——

PRINCE. And the blood of the Talais who deserted under Henry IV, the blood of the Talais who voted for the death of Louis XVI, and of the Talais who just escaped the assizes!

DUCHESS. Dominique!

PRINCE. Whom do you refer to, then? I don't know!

DUCHESS. No one in particular; I call to witness all the Talais together to prevent your saying such outrageous things, to exhort you to live a life a little more worthy of your title, of the glorious past which they have left you, and which you are disgracing!

PRINCE. How can I exist? I must live the life of my times!

DUCHESS. Don't blame the times! You live a life of laziness and vice that pleases you!

PRINCE. I can't bring back the epoch of the Crusades! The day of heroism is past!

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DUCHESS. You ought to do something better than drive a coach from Robinson!

PRINCE. Very healthful exercise!

DUCHESS. You should join the Royalists!

PRINCE. Thank you! One never knows where those things lead to!

DUCHESS. But to help the king!

PRINCE. There are too many who make the king help them!

DUCHESS. Work!

PRINCE. At what?

DUCHESS. A man works when he is in as dangerous a situation as you, Monsieur!

PRINCE. You should have taught me a trade, Madame, when I was young.

DUCHESS. You might at least not get head over heels in debt!

PRINCE. I'm not alone! The Prince of Suabia owes fifty millions!

DUCHESS. That is the Prince of Suabia's affairs: you are not the Prince of Suabia.

PRINCE. I am sorry for it! His mother's a queen, she backs him, the lucky fellow.

DUCHESS. She is very wrong to do it! If I were in her place——

PRINCE. The Queen of Suabia does what she likes: you are not the Queen of Suabia.—Come now, I don't want to get angry, I didn't ask to see you now! You interrupt me at the worst possible moment, and talk to me about the past, the present, and the future; my father, myself—about everything! You blame me, seventeen years later, for failing in my examination!

DUCHESS. I merely wanted to recall all I have done for you!

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PRINCE. You had no need to tell me that. Every time you pay my debts, I have thanked you. We're even!

DUCHESS. A child never ceases to owe its parents!

PRINCE. So I see. You are a very hard creditor! You take advantage of me to criticize every act of mine, my tastes, what I do, how I live! I like cards, horses, luxury, and money! What of it? Fearful crime! I am a gentleman; and I do no more nor less than others to maintain my dignity as such.

DUCHESS. That isn't enough. When a man has the honor to bear your name——

PRINCE. Devil take my name! You'll make me sick of it before long! Sometimes I wish my name were Dubois or Morin; then I shouldn't have to listen to all this twaddle. It seems I can't be noble enough for you, who were born in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, and whose father was a churn manufacturer!

DUCHESS. He was an honest man!

PRINCE. Oh! We have our names—no credit to us!

DUCHESS. No, your names have you—they support you!

PRINCE. Tell me what good they are! They're nice to use in restaurants. The French aristocracy is seen on every menu card in Paris:—There's a certain kind of lamb that's named after me! When, I ask, when will you keep up with the times, and stop pestering me with your worm-eaten conventions of the aristocratic *faubourg!* The Monarchy has fallen years ago; it hasn't existed since the Revolution! Lace collars and red heels and sedan chairs are things of the past! And we, the nobility, called the privileged class even since we lost our privileges, are dead! If not forever, for a good long time! To-day everything is changed——

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DUCHESS. There is going to be war, anarchy, a second Terror!

PRINCE. Possibly: I don't know. What is sure is that we are not going back to the age of Saint-Louis. To-day we don't believe in the nobility. You may have your king, if you like, but I defy you to consecrate him! Every one would laugh at you!

DUCHESS. Be silent, my son! You may if you will be of your time, but don't ask me to join you. To-morrow I am going to have trustees appointed to regulate your affairs and your income.

PRINCE. Would you do that?

DUCHESS. Yes; you have been troublesome enough to me.

PRINCE. And to myself!

DUCHESS. Ah! If you ever have to sell this house, remember that my estate at Récigny and my house in the Rue de Varenne are at the disposal of you and your wife.

PRINCE. Never! I'd rather give riding-lessons!

DUCHESS. Just as you please.

PRINCE. Is that all you have to say?

DUCHESS. Yes.

PRINCE. Then I sha'n't need your assistance: I shall sell everything I have to the highest bidder, and—I'm going to sell the sword!

DUCHESS. No! You wouldn't have the heart——!

PRINCE. You'll see! "For sale: a magnificent sword, unique specimen." And then you talk of trustees——

DUCHESS. Dominique, please——

PRINCE. Very well, then, pay.

DUCHESS. Oh, you wanted to force me to—! You attacked me on my weakest side—the Piédoux side! Your scheme won't work this time, my child! I told you I wouldn't pay a sou, and not a sou will I pay! Sell what-

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ever you like—sword and all. I shall be bitterly disappointed, but I sha'n't be sorry for you. The sword will be in better hands than yours, wherever it goes. You're no son of mine, you're no true nobleman!

PRINCE. [*Interrupting her as he sees* DE HORN *enter.*] Ah, Madame——!

[*Enter* DE HORN.

DE HORN. I beg your pardon, but the Princess sent me to tell you that the guests have begun to arrive——

DUCHESS. Really? [*She goes up-stage.*] Go and get ready, son. [*Looking over the balustrade.*] Yes, there they are!

DE HORN. [*Excitedly, to the* PRINCE.] Well, what's the matter?

PRINCE. My mother is threatening me with trustees! I must have four hundred thousand francs by to-morrow night, and I haven't a sou.

DE HORN. Please don't worry about it: I know where you can get that money.

PRINCE. Oh? [*He shakes hands with* DE HORN. *The orchestra outside plays the Sardinian anthem.*]

DUCHESS. The Queen! Dominique! There's the Queen! [*She goes out.*]

PRINCE. Very well! [*Taking* DE HORN *with him; as they go out.*] We're coming!

Curtain.

ACT III.

[*The* DUCHESS' *château, Récigny. A large room with a recessed alcove at the back, giving upon a long gallery. There are doors to the right and left; many*

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chairs of various kinds, and a few tables. The walls of the gallery are covered with family portraits (the men are in armor, some dressed as lawyers of the "Ancien Régime," the women in dresses of the time, powdered wigs, etc.); each frame bears an inscription on a plaque at the bottom, with the name and motto of the person represented.—To the left is a high Renaissance fireplace and mantel.

As the curtain rises MONTADE *and a servant are on the stage.*]

SERVANT. [*To* MONTADE.] When will Monsieur have the carriage?

MONTADE. Very soon: I shall let you know. I'm waiting for M. de Horn. [*The servant goes out.* MONTADE *looks at the portraits, and reads the mottoes aloud:*] "Brévennes de Talais: Jamais en arrière!—D'Aurec le premier!—Sur mon honneur!—Défends-toi!" [1]

[*Enter* DE HORN.

DE HORN. I'm ready. Ah, you're looking at the ancestors! And the mottoes! There are some very excellent ones!

MONTADE. Don't make fun of them! Those ancestors were very good people! The good Duchess wanted her walls covered with all the Talais of the past! She's simply mad about the aristocracy! She'll die on the 21st of January! [2]

DE HORN. Tell me, we're not going for a long drive, are we?

MONTADE. You needn't fear, the Princess won't fly away! You *are* tenacious!

[1] Literally: "Brévennes de Talais: Never behind!—D'Aurec the first!—On my honor!—Defend thyself!"

[2] The day Louis XVI was beheaded.

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DE HORN. Of course!

MONTADE. Do you remember that conversation of ours, three months ago at our friend D'Aurec's, the night of the famous fancy-dress ball—just before the deluge?

DE HORN. Yes.

MONTADE. Unless I am greatly mistaken, I told you, referring to a plan of yours, "Take care or you'll be fooled?" I am afraid I was not a bad prophet.

DE HORN. Why? A great deal has happened these last three months.

MONTADE. Oh, certainly! Thanks to you the Prince was able to pay his debts, after his mother had said she would have nothing to do with him. But his triumph was short-lived. Soon after, he was forced to sell his house, his horses, even his famous sword, to satisfy a whole army of creditors. By the way, who bought that sword?

DE HORN. Some Englishman, I believe.

MONTADE. The Duchess was as good as her word: she didn't give her son a sou; she got her trustees! So the Prince had to accept her hospitality here at Récigny—Seine-et-Loire. It was a fearful blow!

DE HORN. And the longer it lasts, the worse humor he's in!

MONTADE. Ha! And the arrival of the trustee, M. Sorbier, yesterday hasn't put him in better spirits!

DE HORN. Who is this M. Sorbier?

MONTADE. An old Republican lawyer, a friend of the Duchess! He seems to be changing the lady's ideas in a very curious way. There's only one person who doesn't seem to be affected by what's going on: the Princess. Ah, she is as sparkling as ever, and pretty——

DE HORN. As provoking!

MONTADE. And as impossible of access! [*Gesture from* DE HORN.] No protest! You're not one step nearer your

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goal than you were the night she asked you—for your advice on the Turkish bonds! The more I examine your position, the worse it looks. Of course, I realize all you've done, all the money you've given—but I don't see what you have in return. The husband uses your money, and you are not yet a member of the Jockey Club! The wife has not been bashful either in asking you——

DE HORN. I shall not wait long before asking her——!

MONTADE. Oh, otherwise there is no justice!—I'll tell them to get the carriage ready. [*He goes out.*]

[*Enter the* PRINCE.

DE HORN. [*As he sees the* PRINCE *come in.*] Ah, here's my man!

PRINCE. Was that Montade who just went out?

DE HORN. Yes. Have you found a little peace of mind yet?

PRINCE. Hardly. I'm getting fearfully tired of the life here.

DE HORN. Why, what is there so tiresome in it? The Duchess does everything possible for you—she has only your pleasure and comfort at heart.

PRINCE. I admit it. She's kind because she is victorious. The moment she gained her point she was simply charming. She might have begun a little sooner!

DE HORN. You have very little to complain of; there are thousands worse off than you.

PRINCE. In any event, I need a change of air. I'm going away.

DE HORN. Leave Récigny?

PRINCE. Yes.

DE HORN. Alone?

PRINCE. With the Princess.

DE HORN. Soon?

PRINCE. Three days, at the latest!

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DE HORN. Where?

PRINCE. Hungary.

DE HORN. Ah!

PRINCE. One of my wife's relatives insists on our spending some time there!

DE HORN. Do you intend to stay very long?

PRINCE. Four, five—six months, at the outside.

DE HORN. Good!—Funny idea, to go to Hungary!

PRINCE. Why? In my position, anything is preferable to staying at Récigny. Do you think it's amusing here?

DE HORN. [*Amiably.*] I am never bored!

PRINCE. Thanks! Very kind of you! But your position is not mine! I'm out of place. Of course, I have all I need, but not a sou in cash!

DE HORN. But you have friends?

PRINCE. I have already abused their friendship. And really, you don't intend to support me, do you?

DE HORN. I know you would never allow me to. And I lack the necessary funds. I have a fair income, but to play Monte Cristo——!

PRINCE. There is no necessity for your doing that.—But this trip—yes—that is a necessity!

DE HORN. You will change your mind.

PRINCE. I hardly think so.

DE HORN. Yes, you will. You haven't started yet!

[*Enter a servant.*

SERVANT. [*Announcing.*] The carriage for the gentlemen is ready. [*The servant goes out.*]

DE HORN. Montade and I are going for a little drive in the forest.

PRINCE. Take Jojo with you, will you? He's a good fellow, but he gets on my nerves.

DE HORN. He refused our invitation. Won't you come with us?

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PRINCE. No, thanks!

DE HORN. [*Aside.*] Montade was right, I must come to the point at once. [*He goes out.*]

PRINCE. My mention of that trip seemed to upset him. Can he—? I shouldn't be a bit surprised—! Nonsense!

[*Enter the* DUCHESS, *the* PRINCESS, M. SORBIER, *and* MONTREJEAU.]

DUCHESS. Dominique! We have just had a delightful walk with M. Sorbier!

PRINCE. Indeed!

PRINCESS. In the vegetable garden!

SORBIER. We saw the melons.

MONTREJEAU. They're simply immense, overwhelming!

PRINCESS. [*To her husband.*] You missed a great sight, dear.

DUCHESS. I should think so! It's so much better to breathe the good healthy air than pass your time sulking indoors.

PRINCESS. [*To her husband.*] Take that!

PRINCE. I'm not sulking, I'm bored!

DUCHESS. In the country?!

PRINCESS. You don't want to be amused.

MONTREJEAU. What? Lawns, woods, pastures?!

DUCHESS. Two thousand acres!

MONTREJEAU. Don't you care for that?

PRINCE. It's all too green for me!

DUCHESS. You're bored because you do nothing.

PRINCE. Work!? You're always harping on that.

DUCHESS. I was saying to Sorbier not five minutes ago: I am very much worried for your future.

MONTREJEAU. Those were her very words.

PRINCE. [*Much put out, to* MONTREJEAU.] This is my affair, you understand? My mother and Monsieur are quite sufficient!

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MONTREJEAU. A word to the wise——

DUCHESS. Here you are safe again, with no more debts——

PRINCESS. But just as good as ruined.

DUCHESS. Who pays his debts grows rich. You ought to take advantage of your new situation. After that awful whirlpool of Parisian society from which I saved you, you shouldn't vegetate here; waste your life——

MONTREJEAU. Splendid!

DUCHESS. Aren't you a Duke and a Prince? Haven't you among your ancestors famous and honorable men, among them a Constable?

PRINCE. [*His eyes on the floor.*] The old——!

DUCHESS. Well, when you have all those trumps in your hand, make some use of them. It's your duty to do something worthy!

PRINCE. I have no ambition.

SORBIER. What, at your age?

DUCHESS. He's ridiculous! I have, at my age—I, a woman!

PRINCE. You're not a ruined man!

PRINCESS. What ambition can you expect?

DUCHESS. A boy like him could be anything he liked!

PRINCE. President of the Republic!

DUCHESS. Any one may!

MONTREJEAU. That's so!

PRINCESS. [*To* MONTREJEAU.] Be careful!

DUCHESS. [*To her son.*] You have only to choose. Would you like to go into politics?

PRINCE. I detest politics!

PRINCESS. He doesn't know a thing about it!

MONTREJEAU. Neither do I.

DUCHESS. [*To her son.*] Do you think three-quarters

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of the so-called politicians do? Try it, make a way for yourself: you have a brilliant future.

PRINCESS. What?

DUCHESS. He's popular. Let him run for town-councilman or for Deputy!

PRINCESS. And be defeated!

DUCHESS. You have only to use a little cash! You can't help being elected!

PRINCE. But I haven't a sou!

DUCHESS. I shall pay everything!

PRINCESS. Then will you do away with his trustee?

MONTREJEAU. Bravo, Duchess! Will you——?

SORBIER. It will hardly be necessary, I——

PRINCE. What?

DUCHESS. Certainly! A Deputy may very easily know nothing about his private affairs and govern those of the nation very well!

PRINCE. It's usually the contrary that happens!

MONTREJEAU. Poor old fellow! [*He goes back to the sofa.*]

DUCHESS. Then you can rise to be Minister, Speaker, Ambassador.

PRINCESS. Sultan!

DUCHESS. There is nothing you can't be!

MONTREJEAU. My head's whirling already!

PRINCE. This is all very pretty: there is only one obstacle!

DUCHESS. What?

PRINCE. A Prince d'Aurec ought not to hold office under the present administration.

PRINCESS. [*To the* DUCHESS.] Just what you've said to him a hundred times!

DUCHESS. Why, the Republicans would be only too glad to have a noble!

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PRINCESS. And you, with your ideas, advise him to give the lie to all our principles!

DUCHESS. Of course—it's M. Sorbier's fault! He has taught me a lot. And then, I prefer the Republic with Royalists in it to the Monarchy with Republicans, which would certainly be the case if we should ever have a king.

SORBIER. Which will never happen!

PRINCESS. And what about me in all this? Do you think I want to be the wife of a Republican *parvenu?* The well-known Madame d'Aurec, of the Department of Agriculture, or Religious Education? Oh, no!

SORBIER. But, Madame, the Prince complains of his inactivity. Why should he not try to lead an entirely different kind of life?

DUCHESS. Every one works nowadays. See, there are De Horn and Montade——!

PRINCESS. Would you like him to go into business?

DUCHESS. Oh, no!

PRINCESS. Literature?

DUCHESS. Nor that either: too much bohemianism! Of course, there are exceptions, men who have made a high place for themselves!

PRINCESS. I prefer ours!

DUCHESS. De Horn managed to——

MONTREJEAU. Get made a baron.

PRINCE. Two years ago—at least!

DUCHESS. And he's a millionaire. *He's* one who has made his fortune! And Montade, you see, is received everywhere! He doesn't remember how many editions his works have gone through!

PRINCESS. They're always out of print!

DUCHESS. He'll be an Academician before you.

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PRINCE. [*Excitedly.*] Ah, so you want me to belong to the Academy, do you?

DUCHESS. Why not?

MONTREJEAU. The green coat would become you.[1]

PRINCE. No; it's like the country: too green for my taste!

PRINCESS. But how could he be elected?

DUCHESS. He comes from an illustrious family. The Academy is a Salon! Dominique, you have perfect manners! You'd cut a fine figure there!

PRINCESS. But one must at least have written something, no matter how little!

DUCHESS. What about our ancestors' correspondence? Why do we leave it lying about? The library here is full of wonderful old manuscripts! No one's ever seen them! Dominique can just copy what he likes! He could write a beautiful book, as good as another!

PRINCE. [*Ironically.*] *The Marshal de Talais,* after unpublished documents!

MONTREJEAU. With an engraved portrait!

PRINCESS. And a fac-simile autograph!

PRINCE. That's all I have to do!

DUCHESS. When will you get to work?

PRINCE. Do you mean it?

DUCHESS. Well, if you don't want to go into politics——?

PRINCE. Certainly not! Not politics or——

DUCHESS. Then decide on some profession: architecture, medicine——

PRINCESS. The Prince d'Aurec a doctor! I could never look my husband in the face again!

[1] The official costume of members of the French Academy is a dress coat trimmed with green braid.

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DUCHESS. You're so delicate! You'd think I'd suggested a crime! We'll come to that before long!

SORBIER. Of course: our children will consider it quite a matter of course to see counts who are notaries, marquis' who are lawyers, viscounts who are druggists, and dukes—doctors! The aristocracy must learn to work like ordinary mortals, unless it wants to disappear from the face of the earth!

DUCHESS. That's good common sense!

PRINCE. But the times are not yet ripe for the reforms M. Sorbier speaks of. I want to hear nothing more about my entering a profession. I have one now.

DUCHESS. Laziness!

PRINCE. Precisely: I am a gentleman!

DUCHESS. That's not much.

PRINCE. I think it is.

PRINCESS. What? Think of the presumption on his part in trying to improve upon his past, to make his position, one of the finest and most honorable in the land, one jot better! What more ought he to do than lend some added luster to his name, spend his time living up to his position, in the midst of the world of fashion, making triumphal entries into the Gotha of stylish functions, going about in the various clubs of Europe, and making a name for himself by means of his personal accomplishments, which are the despair of his equals? In short, he should reflect all that is best, all that is noble, all that his ancestors have bequeathed to him! Do you, his mother, consider that "not much"!? Really, you are difficult to please! What do you want, then?

DUCHESS. Deeds, worthy and noble actions!

PRINCE. Bouvines would suit mother.[1]

[1] A famous victory won by Philippe-Auguste.

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DUCHESS. [*Reading the mottoes on the walls.*] "Jamais en arrière! D'Aurec le premier!"

MONTREJEAU. [*Likewise reading mottoes.*] "Montrejeau plus haut!" [1]

PRINCESS. You would have been just the wife for Don Quixote!

DUCHESS. [*To her son.*] What will my lazy gentleman do? What is his duty?

PRINCE. My wife has told you: to set a standard in taste, invent a new clever saying—a perfume, a shade—set in circulation a new cravat, a distinctive hat, find a new method of riding, make vice as attractive as the ridicule of virtue; revolt against the vulgar diamond of the Jew, the sham art bronzes of the *bourgeois*, the hardware of the Peruvian! That is the only occupation worthy of a gentleman nowadays!

DUCHESS. I may be very narrow, but I have always thought there were others!

PRINCE. [*Rising.*] I don't want to hear any more! I'm going!

SORBIER. Please, now—Prince!—Duchess——!

DUCHESS. [*To her son.*] Why are you angry?

PRINCE. [*Drily.*] Now, Mother! You inflicted a trustee on me, forced me to live on your hospitality here in the country to suffer deep humiliation. For the time being I can only resign myself, but I tell you plainly, there is one thing you will never be able to do: make me appear ridiculous. I really must have a few minutes to recuperate after all this talk! I'm going to take a look at your melons.

PRINCESS. So am I. [*The* PRINCE *and* PRINCESS *go out.*]

[1] Literally: "Montrejeau higher!"

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MONTREJEAU. [*Following them.*] Come, cousin, don't get excited!

DUCHESS. [*Very downcast.*] It's very discouraging! I can't do a thing with him! What would you do if you were in my place?

SORBIER. I should try kindness; I should drop the trustee.

DUCHESS. Never!

SORBIER. Now that the moral effect has been made and your authority well established——

DUCHESS. Don't ask me to do that. As long as I live—Dominique shall have a trustee.

SORBIER. But I——

DUCHESS. No, no, you can't persuade me. I have too many reasons.

SORBIER. What reasons? Tell me.

DUCHESS. You ask me what reasons? You, the faithful friend to whom all my troubles are known? Just remember what my life was as a girl of eighteen, when you used to come and have supper Sunday nights with Papa and me!

SORBIER. You had just come back from Sacré Cœur.[1]

DUCHESS. And at that time my only love, my one idea was——

SORBIER. I remember: the nobility!

DUCHESS. When any one mentioned any of the famous heroes of French history in my presence, whenever I read about the deeds of old, my heart beat at a terrible rate! The nobles! In my eyes they were something high above us, something apart, by reason of their better deeds and thoughts and aspirations! They were for me the essence of the good qualities of the whole race. This superior race was in duty bound to carry on the traditions of the

[1] A convent.

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past; each member was part of a long line of ancestors, and it was his sole object in life to hand down intact to his son the unstained family name. I said to myself: "If by any chance I ever make a place for myself in that closed caste, I, Virginie Piédoux, will do my best to honor it."—What a dream! The dream came true, I do belong to the class, and now I know it is less important than my own. I'm punished!

SORBIER. Come, now——!

DUCHESS. I have suffered enough because of the nobility! I brought it my money and my *bourgeois* virtues, it brought me its hereditary vices and its soiled 'scutcheon! I got no happiness out of it, from my husband or my son. There are times even when I am glad I am not a grandmother; a grandson would have had too many chances to inherit his father's vices—that's another of the disillusions of my old age! My last days aren't happy!

SORBIER. Nonsense——

DUCHESS. No, they aren't. When I think of the different life I might have lived if I had not been so obstinate and blind—oh, the marriages I have refused!

SORBIER. [*Pensively.*] Yes!

DUCHESS. I have regretted a hundred times——!

SORBIER. [*Ill at ease.*] Please!

DUCHESS. Why not speak of it? It will make my life easier for a little! I am so sorry I refused you when you asked for my hand—from my father—thirty-five years ago!

SORBIER. Thirty-six.

DUCHESS. How old we're getting! You were an attorney then, a simple attorney, beginning your legal career. Would I consent to become merely Madame Sorbier? Nothing of the sort, I *would* be Countess, Marquise, Duchess! Ah, if I had only been willing to be the wife of M. Sorbier,

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formerly Judge of the Court of Appeals, an upright and honorable man, instead of the Duchess de Talais, I shouldn't be crying over my wasted life! I should have had fine children who were not ashamed of their mother, nor should I be ashamed of them; I should not belong to the Faubourg, the servants would not announce, "Madame la duchesse, the dinner is served." But Madame Sorbier would have been a happy woman! Forgive me, I sinned through pride. God has punished me severely and degraded me in giving me my son, who represents to me the whole of that nobility I used to sigh for! Forgive me!

SORBIER. I have no right to forgive you; I too have often thought the way you did.—Let's drop the subject!

[*The* DUCHESS *rises, and prepares to go out.*

SORBIER. Where are you going?

DUCHESS. To visit my poor.

SORBIER. Let me go with you.

DUCHESS. They're so much more interesting than we are!

[*Enter* DE HORN.

DUCHESS. Back so soon, Monsieur?

DE HORN. Yes, Duchess.

DUCHESS. Did you have a pleasant ride?

DE HORN. Delightful.

SORBIER. What have you done with M. Montade?

DE HORN. I left him in his room, where he is describing the forest.

DUCHESS. These men of letters! They must always be describing something!

DE HORN. [*Bowing.*] Duchess!

[*The* DUCHESS *and* SORBIER *go out.*

DE HORN. Fiction may satisfy Montade, it doesn't suffice for me! [*He picks up a photograph of the* PRINCESS *from*

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the table.] Here is my next novel! In a short while the novel will have been lived!

[*The* PRINCESS *enters and looks at him.*

PRINCESS. What are you doing?

DE HORN. [*At first a little surprised.*] Oh, Princess! I was admiring!

PRINCESS. It was what I should call close admiration!

DE HORN. Do you object to that?

PRINCESS. Admire, but don't touch!

DE HORN. But a picture! That's certainly Platonic enough.

PRINCESS. Plato himself was a hypocrite. Put the picture back on the table, and let us keep our distance.

DE HORN. I want to bring us closer together!

PRINCESS. You are wasting your time.

DE HORN. So that we may come the closer, afterward!

PRINCESS. Good!—It's beautiful weather, go out and enjoy it!

DE HORN. Why?

PRINCESS. Because I feel trouble in the air: I have presentiments!

DE HORN. Good! Then I may begin!

PRINCESS. No!

DE HORN. You see at least, don't you, that I have a confession to make?

PRINCESS. And you are put out because I don't ask you what? I'm not in the least curious.

DE HORN. So much the worse: I am indiscreet.—I love you!

PRINCESS. Is it worth while to ring for a servant?

DE HORN. I love you deeply, with all my power, with all my heart!

PRINCESS. Of course!

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DE HORN. For six months I've been tortured——

PRINCESS. You're better now?

DE HORN. Don't make fun of me! Be good, tell me I have some hope, that perhaps some day——!

PRINCESS. Or some night—"Be good"! Oh, have you lost your mind? Seriously, did you imagine for one second, that I was going to be your mistress?

DE HORN. I imagined that that would be the greatest joy of my life!

PRINCESS. And the greatest honor of mine!! Think for one minute, how could you be my lover?

DE HORN. You have found me worthy of your friendship.

PRINCESS. How do you know that?

DE HORN. I seem to remember hearing you say so?

PRINCESS. A fine reason that! Do you always tell the truth?

DE HORN. Up to now, I have been treated as an intimate friend of the family, I have been shown special consideration——

PRINCESS. And therefore you conclude "That little Princess—mm.—ah! One of these days, I'll have only to open my arms and she will fall into them!" Well, Monsieur, you have aimed a little too high!

DE HORN. Madame, you would not be the first great lady who has stooped!

PRINCESS. That is very true, but when we do stoop, we choose!

DE HORN. And if I am so low that you please to make me feel my position, who can blame me if I aspire to you? What finer ambition could I have? I'm a millionaire, *blasé*, hard to please! There is nothing in the world but you to desire! I have everything!

PRINCESS. Except——

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DE HORN. Except everything! You!! And I feel as if I had nothing!

PRINCESS. Surely you exaggerate!

DE HORN. You are all I have ever wanted, dreamed of!

PRINCESS. Most flattered, I'm sure!

DE HORN. I think it is a punishment for all my wealth that I should love a woman who scorns and despises me! I must be terribly in love with you, your qualities, and your race——

PRINCESS. Everything that you haven't!

DE HORN. I know it; and that is why I love you. I don't need you to tell me that you are a superior being; I am the first to admit it. It is the only thing I have ever been forced to admit. If I hadn't been born what I am, I should have liked to belong to your class!

PRINCESS. No false modesty!

DE HORN. Now you are laughing at me!

PRINCESS. I was never more serious.

DE HORN. You are right.—After all, what do I want?

PRINCESS. I think I know.

DE HORN. Your happiness.

PRINCESS. That's rather a big word.

DE HORN. You don't mean to say you are quite happy now?

PRINCESS. That is a question no one has ever asked me.

DE HORN. Not even your husband?

PRINCESS. Oh, let's leave my husband out of the question!

DE HORN. You defend him?

PRINCESS. Of course I defend him!

DE HORN. As if he were anything to be proud of: the model husband!

PRINCESS. He has always been faithful to me.

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DE HORN. Ha! He has done things a hundred times worse! Ruined you, made you share his exile, his humiliation!

PRINCESS. It is the wife's duty to remain with her husband.—How does that concern you, by the way?

DE HORN. It gives me great pain, because I love you——

PRINCESS. You may continue to suffer, then, Monsieur!

DE HORN. I suffer to see you as you are! You ought to be in a position where your beauty and your accomplishments—are appreciated—you deserve a place——

PRINCESS. You certainly have one which you don't deserve!

DE HORN. Blame me, I don't object! You can't prevent my loving you as I have! You weren't born to live in the country all your life, without even a house of your own! Why should you be the victim of crimes you have not committed? Are you going to live here, shut up with your mother-in-law like a dethroned queen, with a man who is bankrupt, who has to have a trustee? You have a kingdom to rule over in Paris, a kingdom you once held yourself, that your husband caused you to lose—come, I will give it back to you!

PRINCESS. Suggest that to him!

DE HORN. Little he thinks of you! Mademoiselle de Varaucourt, descendant of Richelieu, has now been reduced to the position of wife of a bankrupt country squire! Pretty, isn't it? I have more pride in you than he has, I think more of your social prestige than your husband! With me at least money would flow again in the house he has raided and despoiled; you can spend what you like: you will always have plenty. There'll not be enough room in the house to keep it all! Come with me and let me re-

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establish you where you belong! Be a Princess again, and not what you now are!

PRINCESS. That will do!

DE HORN. No, that will not do! You know life well enough to realize that that will not do—in these times!

PRINCESS. I insist, Monsieur! And the proof is that I ask you to leave immediately! Go away and don't come back: I don't want to see you again!

DE HORN. Oh!

PRINCESS. I don't want anything from you.

DE HORN. You haven't always felt that way!

PRINCESS. I beg your pardon?

DE HORN. Nothing. Don't let me remind you!

PRINCESS. Ah, your services rendered!

DE HORN. Of course, my services!

PRINCESS. Ha! at last! I was foolish to think that these were merely friendly assistances! They were the basest of calculations!

DE HORN. There's little difference. In accepting them you forfeited the right to judge me!

PRINCESS. That's true! How shameful! And what a lesson!

DE HORN. What a lesson for me too!

PRINCESS. Now the real De Horn appears!

DE HORN. Your fault! I was only too glad to be of any assistance to you both, but since——

PRINCESS. Does my husband owe you money too?

DE HORN. A mere trifle! Your surprise is really very good!

PRINCESS. That will do, Monsieur! I cannot allow you to insult me!

DE HORN. Merely interest on my money!

PRINCESS. My husband will see that the capital is returned to you.

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DE HORN. Are you going to tell him?

PRINCESS. Within five minutes.

DE HORN. Will you tell him that I have bought your clothes for you?

PRINCESS. Yes, Monsieur.

DE HORN. He will be delighted!

PRINCESS. I can't say as much for you!

DE HORN. Oh, I have nothing to fear from him. How about you?

PRINCESS. He will understand me: we are equals.

DE HORN. You *are*—equals!

PRINCESS. Insolent Jew!

[*Enter the* PRINCE, *hearing the* PRINCESS's *last words.*

PRINCE. What's the matter?

PRINCESS. Monsieur has just asked me to become his mistress.

PRINCE. Indeed!

PRINCESS. I offered a few objections, and then he spoke something about having rendered us some services. Ask him, he will give you all the necessary details.

[*She goes out.*

PRINCE. Is that true, Monsieur?

DE HORN. What, Monsieur?

PRINCE. What the Princess just said?

DE HORN. You ought to be the first to know that she never lies!

PRINCE. You will regret it.

DE HORN. Why?

PRINCE. Because I am going to ask you to leave.

DE HORN. You see, I am still here.

PRINCE. You will not be long.

DE HORN. Without giving me a reason?

PRINCE. Yes.

DE HORN. I'm good enough to fight a duel with any one.

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PRINCE. I'm sorry, but I'm not "any one." I have honored you by my company, I have received you as an intimate friend in my family, you have made free with us and our acquaintances, patronized the same tailor as I, until you have forgotten that a great gulf separates us! I have even shown myself in public with you, I have ridden with you in your own carriages, and now you talk about your damned money——

DE HORN. I well recall how you swooped down on that damned money!

PRINCE. My hands were less soiled in taking than yours in gaining it! You thought you would take my wife as an indemnity! You considered that the favors of a Princess d'Aurec hardly recompensed you! Whom do you think we are, Monsieur?

DE HORN. You are members of an envious, cold-blooded, and selfish class, which flatters in order to exploit us. You believe you have the right to assume the air of a family portrait with us simply because our ancestors didn't knock down a marquisate by playing the devil with the king!

PRINCE. By the shedding of blood, Monsieur, in battles!

DE HORN. You are the Jews, you—if you use the word as a term of contempt! Count What's-his-Name sells his name to a rich baker whose son he adopts! The granddaughter of a great lord is only too glad to marry the son of a dry-goods merchant around the corner! Chambersac is willing to take commissions from the tailor, the upholsterer, and the horse-dealer! You are the Jews, and I say that before long you will all be in the usury business!

PRINCE. The aristocrat may some day be a Jew, but the Jew will never be an aristocrat!

DE HORN. Nonsense, we lead the world in many

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branches, and I can prove it! But that's not what we're discussing!

PRINCE. No!

DE HORN. I'm not going to put up with your impudence and I'm not afraid of your threats. You really are surprising! You think you can caress and flatter us and catch us in your traps, empty our purses whenever you like, and then throw us aside like a worn-out coat—as soon as you're through with us! And then when we demand some reparation—No, you're mistaken this time. You've refused me your club, and as for the Princess——!

PRINCE. Cur!

DE HORN. And insult into the bargain! No, I'm not getting my money's worth!

PRINCE. Take care, or you'll get more than you're bargaining for!

DE HORN. You owe me money. You're under obligations to me.

PRINCE. I owe you money, but I am not under obligations to you.

DE HORN. You and your wife are under obligations to me.

PRINCE. My wife? You lie!

DE HORN. You are mistaken. [*He takes a note-book from his pocket and opens it.*] "Madame la princesse d'Aurec debtor, three hundred thousand francs." [*The* PRINCE *is astounded.*] She will not deny it—I loaned her at various times. [*Reading.*] "May 5, 1889, thirty thousand; August 17, twenty-five thousand; January 20, 1890, twenty-five; March 11, twenty-five; and two months ago, two hundred thousand—." Ah, these new ball gowns are very dear! Add to this the four hundred thousand you owe me: total, seven hundred thousand francs. You have nothing to say? The moment you wish to discharge me like

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a servant, I ask for my wages. Have you seven hundred thousand francs? No. I shall not leave until I have my money!

PRINCE. [*White with anger, as he raises his arm.*] You—!! Take care, or I'll——!

DE HORN. Violence will not pay your debts, Monsieur. I have taken precautions, and I hold the reins tight in my hands. There is no use becoming excited. Get my money for me: I'll wait.

[*The* PRINCE *stands mute with rage and impotence. He walks back and forth twisting his moustache, casting sidelong glances from time to time at* DE HORN. *The* PRINCE *rings the bell, and a servant enters a moment later.*]

JOSEPH. Monsieur le prince?

PRINCE. Nothing, you may go. [*The servant goes out.*]

DE HORN. You thought you would throw me out, but at the last moment you find you haven't the courage. You're very wise.—You don't see a way out of the difficulty? I can sympathize with you; it's not pretty! You have nothing yourself, and your wife? Ruined by you. Your mother? She will certainly not help you, she hasn't yet digested the Constable's sword——

PRINCE. I give you my word she will pay you.

[*He rises and rings the bell again.*

DE HORN. I should like to see her; you've been ringing that bell a good deal——!

[*Enter a servant.*

PRINCE. Ask the Duchess and the Princess to come here at once, as well as M. Sorbier and M. Montade.

[*The servant goes out.*

DE HORN. Every one?

PRINCE. Every one.

DE HORN. A pleasure party!

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PRINCE. Or an execution.

[*Enter the* DUCHESS, *the* PRINCESS, SORBIER, *and* MONTADE.

PRINCE. Mother——

DUCHESS. Never mind: Thérèse has told me everything. [*To* DE HORN.] Monsieur, if you will be good enough to go to your room, you will find your baggage packed. M. Bertin, who has received instructions from me, is waiting for you below. He will take the same train as you do, the Paris express, leaving at five fifty-eight. To-morrow morning you will be paid.

DE HORN. Very well.

[*He stays for a moment, as if about to say something.*

SORBIER. [*Approaching him.*] I advise you to go, Monsieur, you have nothing more to do here.

DE HORN. [*Going.*] Oh, by the way, the Constable's sword is in my collection!

[*The* PRINCE *is about to follow him, but his mother prevents him with a gesture.*

DUCHESS. Dominique!

[DE HORN *goes out in silence.*

[*The* PRINCE *sits down, angry and disgusted, his head in his hands. He bursts into sobs.*

MONTADE. [*In an undertone.*] Nervous let-down.

SORBIER. [*Aside to the* DUCHESS.] He is yours now; strike while the iron is hot.

PRINCESS. [*To her husband.*] Thank your mother! She deserves it!

DUCHESS. [*Going to the* PRINCE.] Are you satisfied with me? Was I really the Duchess de Talais?

PRINCE. Yes. *You* are noble, not I.

DUCHESS. When will *you* be?

PRINCE. I shall never be the man you want me to be! To-day I can only promise you one thing: to live the life

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of an honest man, and when the time comes, to die like a prince.

DUCHESS. War? Will you give up your life in war?

MONTADE. [*Suavely polite.*] As would any of us.

PRINCE. [*Drawing himself up to his full height, and with conscious pride.*] There is a certain way of doing it——!

Curtain.

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THE PARDON

A Comedy in Three Acts

By

JULES LEMAITRE

Translated by

BARRETT H. CLARK

Presented for the first time at Paris, February 11, 1895, at the Comédie Française

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PERSONS REPRESENTED

GEORGES

SUZANNE

THÉRÈSE

The action takes place in a French manufacturing town.

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THE PARDON

ACT I.

[*A parlor, used as an office. Entrances up-stage to the center, the right, and left.*]

THÉRÈSE. [*Entering center.*] Come here.

SUZANNE. [*Entering after* THÉRÈSE.] I'm afraid.

THÉRÈSE. I tell you there is no one here! Your husband is still at work, and I managed to get rid of the servants. Because—don't you want me to?—I have become used—oh, with his authorization and by his express wishes! —to looking after his house.

SUZANNE. Oh, my dear Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE. I had to. He was utterly helpless, at his wits' end, when he came here two weeks ago!

SUZANNE. How grateful I am to you and your husband!

THÉRÈSE. Don't thank me; it was only natural. Georges couldn't remain there—for a hundred reasons—after that scandal. My husband had the good luck to offer him at once an excellent position. He let him know of it, and there was no cause for regret. You can't imagine what a fine place Georges made for himself at the factory, the moment he came. His invention did wonders for him. It seems your husband is a real person.

SUZANNE. [*Simply.*] Oh, yes!—But what do they say about me? Are you sure nothing is known?

THÉRÈSE. Absolutely sure. Georges spread the story that you were in the country, visiting your mother, for

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your health, and that you would join him when you were better. Even my husband doesn't know the truth. You have no cause for worry.

SUZANNE. Well—Georges is still unhappy?

THÉRÈSE. Very—but that is a good sign. Oh, I'm positive! Because, if he had decided to get a divorce, as he threatened, he would have done it by this time, that's clear. But let's talk about yourself. Poor Suzanne, how could you—you, whom I thought so reasonable, whom I could trust as I could myself——?

SUZANNE. How do I know? Now that it's all over, I can't understand it myself—or hardly——

THÉRÈSE. Well, you married for love, didn't you?

SUZANNE. I think I did——!

THÉRÈSE. Didn't you?

SUZANNE. Oh, yes, I loved Georges, but I loved him as a young girl loves. Do you remember? I was eighteen, and my head was full of romantic notions that I got from novels. I had an idea that a husband was still the lover, the man who brings flowers every day, and says nice things, and is interested in you alone. I was surprised to find marriage so—serious a matter. My husband used to go away for weeks at a time, because he was everywhere in demand to try out his invention. The days were long, and I had no way of filling the empty hours.—Another man sang the song I had become unaccustomed to hear and that I longed for—I was a little fool!—You see, my story is not original.

THÉRÈSE. And I'm not surprised at it except that it is your own. Or rather, do you know what surprises me? I can, with a little effort, imagine the tiresome hours, the idle dreams, even your flirting and imprudence. But that you were able to—well—to go the limit, you, you, Suzanne! I can't comprehend! It seems that in such cases, there is

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so great a chasm—and so difficult to bridge—from beginning to end! Only to think of it!

SUZANNE. You see, when once you begin sliding, you go from one step down to the next, without noticing. Each new step into the great unknown seems the first, so that you don't notice yourself descending. And then, well, as you near the final leap, something evil awakens in you. It's like a fit of giddiness, a shameful intoxication. And then you go, on, on!—Of course when you begin, you don't think you'll go to extremes. You see, Thérèse, you mustn't begin; that depends on us: what follows, does not.

THÉRÈSE. But, did you love—the other?

SUZANNE. I think now that I never did. But I must have loved him a little at first. If I hadn't, what sort of woman must I have been? Really, I don't know now.—How strange it is!

THÉRÈSE. Did he love you?

SUZANNE. He behaved as any man would.

THÉRÈSE. What has become of him?

SUZANNE. I have no idea.

THÉRÈSE. Has he tried to see you again? or write?

SUZANNE. No.

THÉRÈSE. He is discreet. And now, do you love your husband?

SUZANNE. Certainly—him alone. I love him for his own sake, because he is the most loyal and the best of men, and also because of the wrong I have done him. I love him with all my power of repentance, with a new heart, and with a great desire to sacrifice my entire being to him.

THÉRÈSE. How you say that, Suzanne! I'm all trembling to hear you!

SUZANNE. Oh, I'm a changed woman. I have learned more these last few days than in all the rest of my life before.

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THÉRÈSE. It's true, you are changed.

[*A pause.*

SUZANNE. So long as *he* believes it!

THÉRÈSE. That will depend almost altogether on yourself, my dear. I tell you he still loves you, though he tries to keep from doing so, and it's for that reason that I had you come. I don't say you'll regain his affection without trouble. At first it will be hard, his wound is still tender! But the important point is that you should be here, near him, even, perhaps, in spite of him. You must be patient, good, submissive: let him feel that you are sincere. He should find once more in you, only reinforced with serious intentions, the woman you were when you were first married; and then the remembrance of those happy days will slowly give birth again to other remembrances. Then the charm of your mere presence will, almost insensibly, work on his mind. But listen to me giving you advice! You will know better than I what to do. To tell the truth, these matters of love are not my forte.

[*A pause.*

SUZANNE. Have you never been tempted, Thérèse?

THÉRÈSE. No.

SUZANNE. Your husband——?

THÉRÈSE. Excellent. He's not like yours: a great inventor or *savant*—but he's quite satisfactory, and he's not bad-looking or stupid. I have a deep affection for him.

SUZANNE. Are you happy?

THÉRÈSE. Oh, yes. We are rich, and quite gay and happy. We know how to spend our time, he with his farms, and I with my home. We meet again after our work with the utmost pleasure, and we live like two old friends.—No, I have never been tempted. And yet, do you know, they make love to me, here, a great deal! Well, I never paid any attention to it. It's my opinion that when a

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husband is adequate, it's downright madness to look elsewhere for what one has at home, and that all men are alike —or at least sooner or later, end by resembling one another.

SUZANNE. [*Simply.*] No, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. Well, if I'm mistaken, I have no desire to go forth and find out.

[*A pause.*

SUZANNE. Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. What?

SUZANNE. Is he coming soon?

THÉRÈSE. [*Looking at the clock.*] Yes, it's about time now.

SUZANNE. I'm afraid. What if he should send me away!

THÉRÈSE. He won't! He won't.

SUZANNE. If you only knew how he talked to me, there, when he left me, and how I had the sensation that I didn't exist for him any longer, that he swept me out of his life! Oh, I'm afraid, so afraid!

THÉRÈSE. [*Listening.*] Listen! It's he. Hide yourself quickly; get out of the way. I'll manage.

[*She pushes* SUZANNE *into an adjoining room, through the door at the right.*]

GEORGES. [*Enters center, reading a letter which he puts into his pocket the moment he sees* THÉRÈSE.] Hello, that you? I'm very glad to see you, very glad. Is Jacques well?

THÉRÈSE. Very well.—Will you dine with us this evening? Come just as you are; we'll be alone.

GEORGES. No need to tell you I accept. How I must tire you!

THÉRÈSE. You know perfectly well you don't. Jacques is wild about you.

GEORGES. He's a great fellow! Don't you think so?

THÉRÈSE. [*Smiling.*] Oh, certainly.

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GEORGES. I owe so much to him! What would have become of me without him!—and you, Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE. Good!—What did you do last night?

GEORGES. [*Hesitating.*] Last night? Oh, yes; you weren't home. What did I do, last night? Oh, I dined at the restaurant. And then I went to a café-concert.

THÉRÈSE. All alone?

GEORGES. To be sure!—Oh, don't pity me, I spent a tolerable evening.

THÉRÈSE. Poor fellow!

GEORGES. No, no, no, it's not what you think. You see, I'm so busy at the factory that I haven't a moment to think of my private affairs; and then, time does wonders. I'm feeling better now, now that I am free. I tell you, I'm beginning to appreciate a bachelor's life again.

THÉRÈSE. If you want me to believe that, you'll have to say it in a different tone of voice.

GEORGES. But I tell you very calmly, it seems to me.

THÉRÈSE. What were you reading a moment ago, when you came in?

GEORGES. I?

THÉRÈSE. You were re-reading her last letter? Don't deny it.

GEORGES. Well, what of it? It only proves I'm a fool.

THÉRÈSE. I don't see that?

GEORGES. I feel only too plainly my ridiculous position! How insupportable I must be with my endless complaints and foolish behavior! I'm a fool, to think my affairs are any one's else concern! I ought at least to keep still!

THÉRÈSE. [*Supplicating.*] Georges!

GEORGES. There you are! I think of nothing else, every minute of the day. Even when I'm at work. No, no, it was abominable, what she did! Wait, one thing

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comes to mind. During those last days, when I was ignorant of everything, I can't tell you how tender and loving she was, how she cuddled up to me! She was never like that before; up to that time she was sweet and affectionate, but rather indolent and passive. And when I saw her for the first time so—enthusiastic, I said to myself, "At last, she loves me; she loves me for good, she is mine now!" And just at that moment.—Oh, the liar, the liar!

THÉRÈSE. Who knows——?

GEORGES. What?

THÉRÈSE. I say, who knows? So far as I can see, that proves only one thing: that she sought protection in you, a refuge against herself. It proves that she has never ceased loving you. That's my first point. I'll tell you my second in a moment.

GEORGES. My dear Thérèse, I'm not yet altogether an idiot; keep that in mind. Those demonstrations of affection given to the husband at the very time of— Capital! Classic! I see my situation! It has been studied and described by very good authors. And, you see, I have even had an opportunity of feeling the truth of their remarks—a splendid opportunity!

THÉRÈSE. Why this ill-considered irony?

GEORGES. Oh, let me do it, it relieves me, at any rate. There is something decidedly comic in it, you know. [*With a change of voice.*] Well, the day I learned everything, I felt as if I had been struck with a club. In a second, I saw she was nothing to me. I felt no hatred, no anger. When she came in, I didn't question her, I didn't blame or bully her. I merely said to her, "Go away!" She went, and I didn't go back to see her leave. I can't say either that I suffered. It's remarkable.

THÉRÈSE. And since then?

GEORGES. Oh, since!—The idea is always with me, al-

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ways—vibrating, revolving, like an animal gnawing at my vitals!—It's enough to drive me mad. Yet sometimes, I am on the point of giving in. I remember the time when we were engaged; I can see her again, so sweet, and tender, and innocent— And then I remember trifling details of our life together, her little mannerisms,—things she said in her own particular way. And then I feel myself giving in, and finding excuses for her: her inexperience, her youth, her loneliness when I was away—but all of a sudden, the image of what she did surges in on me and lives again in my brain, clear as day, precise in its concrete details— In my brain? No, in my flesh, like a claw. And then I want to hold her in my arms, cover her with kisses, mark her with them, blot out those others, and make her my own again—or perhaps strangle her.

THÉRÈSE. In other words, you still love her: my second point.

GEORGES. [*Following his own train of ideas.*] But, my God, why? Why did she?

THÉRÈSE. My dear friend, *that* we shall never know—nor will she, for that matter. Therefore, there is no use asking her. But since you still love one another, since you certainly cannot live without her, nor she without you—it's very simple: you must forgive her and take her back—at once.

GEORGES. Take her back? But, I'd be a coward, Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE. A coward because you would be doing a good deed? Because you would be doing an act of justice? Yes, justice! Suzanne has expiated her sin, and she is ready to expiate further. You have as a proof the letters I have received from her, those I have shown you, and those she wrote to you; they are full of humility, they are pathetically sincere——

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GEORGES. Sincere?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, sincere! That's as clear as day, and at bottom, you believe it yourself, as well as I. Well, why do you pretend to doubt it?

GEORGES. Let's drop it, Thérèse. I have been made a fool of long enough——

THÉRÈSE. That word again! The word proves that you attach less importance to what you feel and really believe, than to the interpretations that fools or gossips might make—if your affair had been public. Now, it is not. It is therefore merely the idea of being made a fool of—and you haven't been—that terrifies you. Well, that is perfectly ridiculous and petty if you want to know what I think; it's unworthy of you.

GEORGES. You abuse me from sheer charity, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. You're mistaken; I abuse you with perfect sincerity. If every one here knew your story, I'd still say, "Take back your wife who repents and loves you." But every one does *not* know what has happened; every one, including my husband, and even Suzanne's own mother. There are just you and I—you and I, do you understand?—who know it.

GEORGES. Are you sure of that?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, I am sure.

GEORGES. Do you think that *there*——?

THÉRÈSE. They may have talked, or supposed, but rest assured, they've stopped talking long ago.—Anyway, what difference can it make to you what is said five hundred miles from here?

GEORGES. But, my dear Thérèse, you understand that this reconciliation is a very serious matter—that cannot take place except under certain conditions. I must be absolutely assured that I can count on her without the shadow of a doubt. I must— No, it's impossible. I admit she

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is sorry for what she did, that her resolutions are good, but do you know what they say?

THÉRÈSE. What?

GEORGES. That it is more difficult for a woman who—well, to stop at a first lover than to have none at all.

THÉRÈSE. What great moralist said that? And what did he know about it? Why couldn't he have kept still! According to such sages the hearts of men and women ought to be ruled in straight lines, like music paper!—I tell you, I will answer for Suzanne, myself: she knows her duty, and she accepts every condition; she knows that from now on she will have to be not only irreproachable, but at every opportunity give you absolute proof of it. I should only like to be sure of *you;* for, make no mistake, you're the one who will have the greater and more difficult burden to bear. It is easier to repent than to forgive. Bear in mind what that means: to forgive the slip.—It is necessary, my dear Georges, really to forget, or to remember only to pity, without a spoken word! Shall you be able to do that?

GEORGES. Certainly, if I were sure——

THÉRÈSE. [*Smiling.*] But I am sure, I who am a very reasonable being. Come, have the courage to consent at once to what you are going to do, sooner or later. [*A gesture from* GEORGES.] Oh, yes! Or why, in spite of your assertions at first, haven't you applied for a divorce? How, when you came here, did you imagine of your own accord, that story of Suzanne's illness and her spending her vacation in the country, unless you acknowledged in your secret heart the possibility of a reconciliation, and forgiveness? How sensible you have been! No, I tell you, everything is not lost! Nothing is hopeless when you apply a little goodwill and heart-felt simplicity. Don't torture yourself any longer. Isn't there a touch of false pride, and—well—some innate meanness in you when you nourish and rear up in

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yourself the evil you have in you? You will be cured, merely in living and loving. You are both young, and you both have a plenteous store of happiness if you gather up the fragments of the past— What are you thinking about?

GEORGES. I'm thinking—that you are the best of friends; that I can hide nothing from you; that you know my wounds and the balm that is good for them; that I wish to believe you and act on your advice.

THÉRÈSE. Your wanting to is not enough, Monsieur. What do you decide?

GEORGES. Well—write to her, and let her hope that perhaps—after a while— But you are the one who wanted it! You understand it's your idea, that if it turns out unfortunately, I shall have a right to blame you?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, I understand. [*Pointing to the door at the right.*] Do you know who is there?

GEORGES. Who?

THÉRÈSE. Suzanne.

GEORGES. Is Suzanne there? No, no, let her go! I can't—yet! It's too soon! I tell you, I can't!

THÉRÈSE. [*Opening the door.*] Come, Suzanne. [*To* GEORGES.] I'll see you later.

[*She leaves through the center door.*

SUZANNE. [*She comes down-stage, very humble, toward* GEORGES, *whose back is turned.*] Georges!

GEORGES. I didn't hear you, Suzanne.

SUZANNE. Georges! Don't send me away!—Let me live with you—regain my place at your side—prove to you that I'm not altogether unworthy your forgiveness—I won't be troublesome.—Don't look at me, only let me exist in your house— Will you?

GEORGES. Yes, Suzanne.

SUZANNE. How good you are! I love you! [*She takes his hand and kisses it.*] Well,—do you want me to stay?

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GEORGES. Yes, Suzanne. [*She still holds his hand; he gathers her slowly to him.*] You understand that this is a serious moment for us both? You realize what your responsibilities are in returning here? You are firmly determined never to——?

SUZANNE. Oh——!

GEORGES. Swear it.

SUZANNE. Oh yes, I swear.

GEORGES. So, the past is wiped out? We'll never speak of it?

SUZANNE. Never.

GEORGES. We'll never think of it?

SUZANNE. Never.

[GEORGES *draws her nearer to him, she bends back, and he kisses her forehead.*

GEORGES. Now, let us try to live! [*A long pause.* SUZANNE *is immobile;* GEORGES *walks back and forth.*] Is your mother well?

SUZANNE. Well enough.

GEORGES. What's the matter?

SUZANNE. Nothing serious: neuralgia.

GEORGES. Of course: change of weather.

SUZANNE. Probably.

[*A pause.*

GEORGES. What train did you come on?

SUZANNE. The five o'clock. Thérèse met me at the station.

GEORGES. Your baggage——?

SUZANNE. Thérèse said she would look after it.

GEORGES. Oh, by the way, we dine with her to-night. You'll meet her husband; he's an old friend of mine.

SUZANNE. Yes, I know.

[*A pause.*

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GEORGES. But—I'm thinking—after your long journey in such dust—will you go into my room?

SUZANNE. With pleasure.

GEORGES. Here, this way. [*He opens the door at the left.*] You see, the house is not bad—almost a little hôtel, between court and garden.—And I don't pay overmuch; quite a bargain—just think——

[*End of Act I.*]

ACT II.

[*Two weeks later. The same room as in the First Act, but more richly furnished.*]

SUZANNE. [*Seated, sewing. Enter* GEORGES.] Hello, dear? Have you had a good day? Did you work hard?

GEORGES. [*Indifferently.*] Yes.

SUZANNE. Nothing wrong?

GEORGES. No.

SUZANNE. Then, you're satisfied?

GEORGES. Yes.

SUZANNE. Is it true that the workmen adore you?

GEORGES. I'm not hard on them.

SUZANNE. Do you know what was said of you yesterday where I was visiting?

GEORGES. What?

SUZANNE. That you were a very remarkable man—those were the very words—and that your invention was one of the finest and most useful of modern times. Explain it to me, will you?

GEORGES. What?

SUZANNE. Your invention.

GEORGES. You wouldn't understand.

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SUZANNE. If you explained it, I might.

GEORGES. Never mind; it doesn't concern you.

SUZANNE. They said that your discovery saved hundreds of human lives every year.

GEORGES. It's quite possible.

SUZANNE. Splendid! Oh, how proud I am of you! How I love you! [*She kisses him; he accepts the kiss rather impatiently.*] Don't you like me to kiss you?

GEORGES. Of course I do.

SUZANNE. What's the trouble?

GEORGES. Nothing.

SUZANNE. Yes, there's something.

GEORGES. Why didn't you go out to-day?—You ought to take a little walk every day, to see your friends.—A young woman like you ought to have some amusement.

SUZANNE. My friends!—I haven't been able to make any real ones during the past two weeks.—And then, I thought you preferred to have me stay at home. I enjoy myself, I tell you, and I have plenty to do. Look at this room, you'd hardly recognize it!

GEORGES. That's so.

SUZANNE. I arranged it all myself. Isn't it pretty?

GEORGES. Yes.

SUZANNE. You're not very enthusiastic about it—doesn't it please you?

GEORGES. Oh, I——

SUZANNE. Come, tell me!—I don't mind if you criticize, so long as you notice what I do.

GEORGES. Well——

SUZANNE. What?

GEORGES. Well—what shall I say? My tastes are a bit *bourgeois*, and all these knick-knacks and——

SUZANNE. You don't like it?

GEORGES. Oh, I'm no judge, I don't understand, I think

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it's rather— You aren't angry? Well, I think this room is a bit—er—fast. There!

SUZANNE. Oh, Georges!—And I went to so much trouble, and I thought it was so pretty! [*Controlling her emotion.*] But I'll change it all, I tell you.—You see, I want there to be nothing in me or about me that is at all displeasing to you——

GEORGES. Why didn't you go out this afternoon?

SUZANNE. I have already told you: there are certain days when I rather like to stay home alone.

GEORGES. That's not the real reason?

SUZANNE. I see no other.

GEORGES. If you had the courage to be absolutely sincere——

SUZANNE. Well, there *may* be another reason. Do you remember what you told me about that beautiful Madame Rousseau, our new acquaintance?

GEORGES. Why, no.

SUZANNE. You wanted me to see less of her, because she seemed to you rather frivolous and you feared she might exert a bad influence over me. As I was practically sure of meeting her if I went out to-day—why, I decided to stay in.

GEORGES. I didn't want that at all—I advised you not to make Madame Rousseau one of your intimate friends, to manage to meet her less often.—You behave as if I were a tyrant; it's ridiculous.

SUZANNE. I thought I was doing right. Forgive me.

GEORGES. Oh, it's nothing, and there is no reason to be so repentant. But you ought to see that I have more confidence in you, that I don't want to make your life intolerable. At any rate, you might have called on Thérèse—why don't you see her oftener?

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SUZANNE. But, my dear, I've called twice without finding her in, and it's over a week since she was here. You might even say she was dropping *our* acquaintance!

GEORGES. What an idea! Thérèse feels as she always did toward us! But you see, she has her husband and her home.—Well, to return to you, I'd really prefer you to go out, take walks—it's not good for you to be alone too much —what must you be thinking of all the while?

SUZANNE. Nothing, my dear; I haven't time. When once you set about looking after your household seriously——

GEORGES. I insist, you are thinking of something. I can see it, I am positive— I know you have something continually on your mind. Why, last night, at the play—it was gay enough, too—you were so sad!

SUZANNE. You're mistaken, I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

GEORGES. Not visibly.

SUZANNE. That was perhaps because I had already seen the play; we go to the theater nearly every night.

GEORGES. Well, what could we do with our evenings, here alone, tête-à-tête?—You haven't many amusements, for that matter.

SUZANNE. I could well do without that, if you wished me to.

GEORGES. No. It's the best thing for us to go out as often as possible, only I should like you, I confess, to appear to enjoy yourself more than you do. Why did you look like that last night?

SUZANNE. Well——

GEORGES. Because of the subject of the play? It had to do with a husband.—My poor girl, what would you have our comic writers do? It's our ancient French gaiety. If people didn't go there to forget, there would always be

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half of the audience who would not dare to laugh. Why didn't you laugh? I can tell you, I did!

SUZANNE. Georges!

GEORGES. Tell me, what were you thinking of?

SUZANNE. Nothing, my dear.

GEORGES. At this moment, what are you thinking of? Come now, out with it—at once—there, under that calm countenance, arise remembrances, thoughts—dare to say no!

SUZANNE. But, my dear, it's not I but you who are continually thinking of it.

GEORGES. [*Surprised.*] That's true—always. [*A pause.*] Shall I tell you why?

SUZANNE. Georges, please——!

GEORGES. Because—well—I don't know how it happened—it's my fault! I didn't question you, I didn't even wish to hear—but there is something—certain details, that I'd like to hear now, that I must, yes, I must know. Promise me to answer, and when I know, that'll be the end; you sha'n't suffer any more.

SUZANNE. [*Imploringly.*] My dear!

GEORGES. Yes, yes, you must! Otherwise, I can't spend a quiet moment, and I shall make you miserable.—Tell me, where did you meet? How did you manage to get away?

SUZANNE. I beg you! It will make both of us sorry afterward!

GEORGES. You must tell me, you must. Was it in a hotel?

SUZANNE. No.

GEORGES. In an apartment he had furnished?

SUZANNE. Yes.

GEORGES. And—what time was it? Tell me! Tell me! Was it in the afternoon you went out?

SUZANNE. Yes.

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GEORGES. While I, poor fool!— Oh, I see it all now: cab, heavy veil, two doors—wasn't that it?

SUZANNE. Just about.

GEORGES. Nothing original about it, at least! And, did you stay long?

SUZANNE. Oh, no!

GEORGES. An hour?

SUZANNE. I don't know.

GEORGES. And you went often?

SUZANNE. Twice.

GEORGES. I was away at that time for long periods—did he ever come to our house?

SUZANNE. No.

GEORGES. No?

SUZANNE. I swear it before God, who is my witness what I suffer this minute!

GEORGES. And—what particularly attracted you in him? In what was he superior to me? You won't answer? What are you thinking of now? [*Approaching her.*] Were you —were you happy?

SUZANNE. No.

GEORGES. You lie! You lie!

SUZANNE. Oh, Georges, you're cruel! [*She breaks into sobs.*]

GEORGES. Yes, I'm a brute—a coward; it's true we swore never to speak of these things, and I have broken my word—you have kept yours: it was easier for you.

SUZANNE. If you have suffered so much in keeping silent, think what I must have endured: to speak.—Think of that. I'm not blaming you, and I'm trying not to cry, but if you begin again to cross-question me as you did just now, I'll always do as you ask me, only I warn you, whatever wrong I have done you, it won't be long before we are quits.

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GEORGES. You are right, Suzanne: I beg your pardon.—It's all over now.—Come, dry your tears—and go out, take a walk—you still have time, and it will do you a world of good.

SUZANNE. I don't want to, dear.

GEORGES. Tut, tut! You don't have to be in the house forever—you are free. Take a walk, I want you to—I must be alone—go now, go!

SUZANNE. Very well, dear. [*She goes out.*]

GEORGES. [*Alone.*] To work! That is left me, at least.

[*He sits at a table, opens a book, moves some papers, takes a pen, and looks straight before him. Enter* THÉRÈSE.]

GEORGES. [*Joyfully.*] You!

THÉRÈSE. Isn't Suzanne here?

GEORGES. Didn't you meet her?

THÉRÈSE. No.

GEORGES. She has just gone out.

THÉRÈSE. Then I'll run; I came to take her with me.

GEORGES. She was complaining that she's seen nothing of you recently. She said you were avoiding us.

THÉRÈSE. You know that's not true. I have come to be so intimately connected with her affairs—I'm sometimes afraid I get to be troublesome, at least just now—and I don't like to impose myself— You can easily understand my feelings.

GEORGES. Of course.

THÉRÈSE. Did you tell her that we met by accident two or three times as you left the factory?—It was quite natural, because it's in my neighborhood.

GEORGES. What was the use? She might think we were speaking of her, and worry. It's better for her to know nothing at all.

THÉRÈSE. Of course.

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GEORGES. Oh, Thérèse, how I enjoyed those walks with you, and those conversations—all too short!—along the great empty quays!—Those were my only moments of happiness. I don't know what I should do without you. How good of you to come now! Shall I tell you something? I rather thought you'd come.

THÉRÈSE. So, you and Suzanne don't—hit it off together?

GEORGES. Well, no! I've just had a ridiculous scene with her.

THÉRÈSE. What was the matter?

GEORGES. Nothing.

THÉRÈSE. Isn't she nice to you?

GEORGES. She's perfect—only—do what I can, it's impossible to forget; I keep thinking of it all the time. It's in my blood, and I can't get rid of it. I'm poisoned.

THÉRÈSE. And yet you don't doubt her repentance, or her love for you?

GEORGES. Oh, she's doing her best, but I can't rid myself of the idea. I thought that if she were with me everything would turn out beautifully; I thought if I could see her near me and hold her in my arms, that would dispel the phantoms of the past. Not a bit of it. When she's moody, it gets on my nerves, because I imagine she's thinking of what happened,—and when she's gay, I think she's making game of me. Listen, Thérèse, since she's come back —it's awful!—I can't drive away the thought of him, that other— I think of him oftener than before. If I let him alone, as I did, when the smash came, it was merely because I had decided on divorce. But now it's clear as day my attitude toward him is completely changed. I've got to find him, and tell him——

THÉRÈSE. [*Smiling.*] Rather late for that.

GEORGES. I appear to you ridiculous?

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THÉRÈSE. No, only an object of pity, and,—if I may say so,—not very generous. Yes or no, have you forgiven Suzanne?—You have no right, since you've taken her back, to make her unhappy. You give with one hand and take back with the other. You mustn't. Look out, Georges, you are the only one who is really at fault.

GEORGES. It's easy enough for you to talk. Forgive her, I've done that! But forget—I cannot. You see, I simply cannot! Why, at times she makes me feel very tenderly toward her with her great sorrow and that little air of submission—she's young and not bad-looking. I kiss and pet her like the pretty child she is—but the moment she is in my arms, it's just as if a burning flame shot through me. I say to myself, "She is *comparing!*" and then I cast her off brutally, or else I press her more closely as if I wanted to hurt her. And then she is afraid, and doesn't understand what I mean. At bottom, I believe I hate her. That's because I have loved her too deeply.—I can't tell you what she has been to me. I was quite a student, I had done a good deal of traveling, and had seen some of life, even; met all kinds of women. But I had never before really been in love; she was the first. I sought in her the final rest, a haven for life. In her, I centered all the tenderness of which I was capable, every thought, my whole ambition; I worked in order that she might be proud of me, and become rich. It was for her sake that I was proud of my successes.—You have no idea how seriously I took marriage—I was a fool, wasn't I?

THÉRÈSE. [*Troubled.*] Not at all.

GEORGES. And every day when I came home, and saw her lighted window from the street, my heart beat as it did the day after I was married.—Yes, every time my heart beat, as I got nearer and nearer to her lips, to that kiss I

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had looked forward to the whole day long.—Can you understand that?

THÉRÈSE. [*As before.*] Perfectly.

GEORGES. Think what I went through!—My poor Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE. It is too bad—I often think of it—. Your life has been bound up inseparably with mine this last month. How I wish I could be of some help to you; I can't bear to see you this way, but what can I say? The only thing I can do is to listen to you, and I'm doing that with all my heart. Who knows? Perhaps by suffering and talking about it, your trouble will be lightened!—And then, recognizing Suzanne's efforts, you will see it all in its true light, like the true man you are, for it seems that you men are more just than we. Time will heal your wound; I'm sure you will still be happy.

GEORGES. No, no—it was all an illusion: between her and me there is a chasm that cannot be bridged. Time, reason, her repentance—nothing is of any use—something else——

THÉRÈSE. What?

GEORGES. I don't know—I'm changed, somehow. I'm not what I was. At times, I believe I'm still in love with her, but it's not the same sort of love—no!— Very mysterious, isn't it?—you can't understand, can you, Thérèse?

THÉRÈSE. Why do you always ask whether I understand?

GEORGES. You are wisdom incarnate, Thérèse.—You're everything that's——

THÉRÈSE. Oh, quite!

GEORGES. Don't make fun! Shall I tell you? You are the sort of woman meant for me.

THÉRÈSE. Oh!

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GEORGES. It might have happened that way; I knew you a long time before I knew Suzanne. You were just as pretty as she—you still are, prettier, even—yes, you are!—Why do you keep your veil on?

THÉRÈSE. Do you object to it?

GEORGES. Yes, it hides your kind eyes.

THÉRÈSE. Very well— [*She takes off her veil and throws it on a chair.*]

GEORGES. [*Looking at her.*] Yes, it's you again—I see you now as a young girl; you have hardly changed, you had that same calm, sweet air about you, that enveloping charm. Only, as we had played together since childhood, you never appealed to me as a woman; I was near happiness without knowing it. Oh, what a fool I am! I wonder whether you would have accepted me?

THÉRÈSE. Perhaps.

GEORGES. Really?

THÉRÈSE. Oh, yes— I'll tell you a secret, there's nothing wrong in that, it's so long ago. When you asked for Suzanne's hand—I was reasonable enough at the time!—I was a little envious. I can't deny that I had a high regard for you, Georges. And if lately I have gone to a good deal of trouble for your sake, it was friendship, pure and simple—yet perhaps with a tinge, an after-thought of those few tears you once cost me.— But let's talk about something else!

GEORGES. No, please! How unfortunate, Thérèse! We should have been happy together; you would have been a true companion for me! Why did I never see that before? With your splendid woman's commonsense, you would have been not only a wife for me, but an associate. Your lightness of heart would have made my life happy.—*You* would never have betrayed me! You would have loved me tenderly —as I would have loved you—always——

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THÉRÈSE. [*In a revery.*] Yes, I think——

GEORGES. At least, since this isn't so—have pity on me, my dear— [*He takes her hand, but she draws it back.*] What's the matter? You can at least pity me! I have the right, because you know, Thérèse, it's your fault I'm so unhappy;—you ought to be kinder to me now, especially as you too have made me suffer.—Let me—let me love you, let me feel the warmth of your affection, let me forget—— [*He approaches her and nearly puts his head on her shoulder.*]

THÉRÈSE. [*Alarmed.*] Georges! Georges!

GEORGES. What is it, darling?

THÉRÈSE. You mustn't, Georges, you mustn't!

GEORGES. What?

THÉRÈSE. I——

GEORGES. I adore you, Thérèse, that's the downright truth, and I'm surprised I never realized it before. When I took so strange a pleasure in confessing to you things I should have concealed even from myself—it was because I loved you! And you yourself, Thérèse, if you bore with me like the angel you are, if my everlasting complaints didn't annoy you, it was because you loved to console me, that something of my fever had got into your blood. There are certain things you can't listen to unmoved.— Don't shrink from me, dearest. After what you've done for me, that would be too unkind—let me kiss you.—Your eyes! Your hair! Your mouth!

THÉRÈSE. [*Calmly disengaging herself.*] Georges, you're mad. [*She stands up and goes to the window.*] Heavens! Suzanne!

GEORGES. Suzanne?

THÉRÈSE. She's opening the outer door.—Good-by, I'll go out through the garden.

GEORGES. Don't you want to see her?

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THÉRÈSE. No.

GEORGES. [*Taking hold of her wrists.*] To-morrow, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. No.

GEORGES. [*Still holding her.*] I wish it. Please, Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE. [*As if saying, Yes.*] No, no! [*She leaves.*]

GEORGES. [*Alone. He arranges the chairs, which are in disorder, then sits at the desk, and pretends to be working. Enter* SUZANNE.]

GEORGES. [*Amiably.*] Did you have a pleasant walk?

SUZANNE. Yes, dear.

GEORGES. Where did you go?

SUZANNE. Nowhere in particular, at first; then I went to see Thérèse, and she wasn't in.

GEORGES. Did you do any shopping?

SUZANNE. No, I was afraid I'd be tempted. You don't seem to believe it, but I've become a very economical housekeeper. You ought to see my accounts!

GEORGES. I have. You're a good little wife, Suzanne, and I love you dearly— Why, what's the matter?

SUZANNE. It's been so long since you have spoken to me like that! But I'm so glad!

GEORGES. I blame you for one thing only.

SUZANNE. [*Nervously.*] What?

GEORGES. You are likely to become too economical. [*Looking at her.*] What's that dress? That's not gay enough, you know! I have noticed that you dress nowadays so severely!——

SUZANNE. [*Delighted.*] Did you notice that?

GEORGES. I like to see you beautiful, well dressed, the way you used to be; we can afford it, thank God! I want you to be a credit to me.— This room, for instance, I can't imagine why I spoke as I did about it! It's very

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pretty and nicely arranged. Why, what more natural than that a woman of your age——?

SUZANNE. [*During the last speech she has found* THÉRÈSE'S *veil on a chair.*] And what have you been doing while I was away?

GEORGES. I—? I've read, worked—you see? [*He moves some papers about on the desk.*]

SUZANNE. You weren't disturbed?

GEORGES. I tell you I was working,—did a lot. I got hold of a splendid idea——

SUZANNE. Were you working all the time?

GEORGES. Nearly.

SUZANNE. Nearly?

GEORGES. What do you mean with your questions? [*He turns about, and sees the veil in* SUZANNE'S *hands.*] Oh, that veil——?

SUZANNE. Why didn't you tell me Thérèse was here?

GEORGES. And why do you ask such questions? Yes, Thérèse was here, she came to see you—what of it? What is there so extraordinary about that?

SUZANNE. Nothing—unless——

GEORGES. Unless?

SUZANNE. Unless it's your saying nothing about it, and the temper with which you answer my very natural questions.

GEORGES. Come, Suzanne, we're not going to change parts at this stage of the game, are we? You're not going to give us a scene of jealousy? To begin with, I don't deserve it, and even if I did——

SUZANNE. Stop right there, Georges. [*With a great effort.*] No, I'm not jealous; I know Thérèse, and I am positive that she would never wrong me; I shall never forget what a friend she has been to us. I know very well what you think of her, and I have no reason to complain; I

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shall try to be as good as she is, that's all.—Only, if I might ask one thing of you? Don't conceal anything from me——

GEORGES. But, I——

SUZANNE. I understand: you have nothing to conceal, I'm the blunderer, it's my fault. But bear in mind what I say—I'm putting you so high on your pedestal, my love for you is so mingled with respect and confidence! Even when you are a little disagreeable, you are my only protection, my surety, so that if I came to lose my blind, child's faith in you, I think the earth would give way under me and I couldn't bear to live!

GEORGES. My, what big talk, my dear! Come, it's all over, let's say nothing more about it. [*He paces back and forth.*] We must be mad, or going mad! Taking things tragically that are hardly worth talking about! You might think we were the only ones this had ever happened to since the beginning of the world! Oh, Lord, if we knew the history of every family! This is perfectly ridiculous, turning everything into "domestic drama." Listen, let's have a truce: what's passed is over and done with. Now I'm certain of you; you're no longer a child. You may rest assured, I sha'n't trouble you any more. But for your part, you too must be reasonable; you ought to forget, since I don't want to remember. Then, if you want to please me, don't put me on so high a pedestal. I'm only a man—and what is there remarkable in a man?— I'm something of a dreamer: I took love, and marriage, and all that, too seriously! But I tell you we mustn't ask too much of life; I'm doing very well with what it affords me. We shall live comfortably—like two good friends—just like Jacques and Thérèse; look at those two philosophers who know the art of living!— Now that we have agreed—let's kiss and make up! [*He goes out humming.*]

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SUZANNE. [*Alone.*] Oh! I loved him more when he was disagreeable!

[*End of Act II.*]

ACT III.

[*A month later; same scene as in the preceding act.*]

THÉRÈSE. [*Entering.*] Yes, it's I. You don't seem glad to see me?

GEORGES. Didn't you get my letter?

THÉRÈSE. That was the reason I came.

GEORGES. [*Nervously.*] But, Suzanne——?

THÉRÈSE. Don't worry, she hasn't returned yet.—Besides, the infrequency of my visits these last six weeks must have given her a hint. But for that matter there's no reason why I shouldn't be here.

GEORGES. Well, do you want to wait for her? I have to go to the factory. [*Looking at the clock.*] I'm late already. [*She bars his way, as he is about to leave.*]

THÉRÈSE. [*Ironically.*] Now that's too bad, but you're going to listen to me.—Don't be afraid, I sha'n't keep you long—only—see here—you've written three times breaking your engagements with me. Oh, you give the best reasons in the world each time! I have come merely to ask whether you are in earnest; Georges, tell me the truth—I want it.

GEORGES. There's nothing wrong: it happens that I am not always at liberty to do what I want to do; you see, neither you nor I are free, and we must be very careful, and——

THÉRÈSE. Now, tell me the truth——

GEORGES. I have.

THÉRÈSE. No.

GEORGES. Well, I should never have told you if you

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hadn't been so anxious to know: I am uneasy about Suzanne; I don't know what she suspects or guesses, but there's no doubt she is very unhappy; I know she cries a good deal when I'm not here.—And when I see her poor little face so changed, and her eyes full of tears—well—I begin to pity her—and—I'm not a brute, at any rate.

THÉRÈSE. Is that all?

GEORGES. You ought to understand that, Thérèse. Why, even Jacques must have some vague suspicion——

THÉRÈSE. Never mind about Jacques. It's rather late to think of that.—I have already told you that he has absolute confidence in me, and I've been decent enough to spare him any anxiety. You needn't worry.

GEORGES. Poor fellow!

THÉRÈSE. Do you pity him, too? You pity everybody, but what about me?

GEORGES. [*Absorbed in his own thoughts.*] I must confess that when I meet Jacques I feel horribly embarrassed.—And then, I remember one thing that used to incense me more than anything else, and that was the thought of that other—you know?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, Suzanne's lover.

GEORGES. To think that that fellow was vile enough, at the very moment he was betraying me, to shake my hand! And here I am doing precisely the same thing—Oh, it's despicable!

THÉRÈSE. And do you think you're doing the decent thing by me?

GEORGES. But I——

THÉRÈSE. Do you realize that you have just said about as cruel a thing as a man can say to a woman?

GEORGES. I?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, you have. If you truly loved me, you wouldn't suffer from those things you complain of.

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GEORGES. But I have always loved you, Thérèse; you have been a true friend to me, haven't you? a refuge?

THÉRÈSE. Yes—I *have* been.

GEORGES. And you still are, Thérèse; and those complaints are merely proofs. If I tell you everything, it is merely because I am yours, all yours, with my weakness and troubles, and because your own goodness has taught me to place my burdens on your back. Just think what a fearful trial all this is to me—and it's all my own—our fault.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, my fault, isn't it?—Tell me, you think I'm to blame? You are angry because I was willing to sacrifice my husband and my friend; in other words, I was willing to do what you implored me to do!—Or rather, you believe I led you astray, and you take me to task for making you fail in your duty to your wife, to have laid snares for your virtuous self.—Really, you were intended to be virtuous; I mean it, seriously. It's a pity you didn't find it out sooner.

GEORGES. Thérèse! Don't talk like that, or I'll end by believing you are tired of me.

THÉRÈSE. You'd prefer that, wouldn't you?

GEORGES. What possible proofs do you want of my love, Thérèse? Listen to me: as long as we stay here, we're going to be miserable. Do you want to go away? Shall we go, far away?

THÉRÈSE. [*Ironically.*] Thank you, Georges.

GEORGES. What do you mean?

THÉRÈSE. How you would hate me if I said yes! Well, you're doing your best, and I thank you for the effort—for the lie.— My poor friend, we were happy only once: the first time we were together—do you remember? We cried like two fools—it was enchanting! Next day it was

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all over; I felt that you were angry with me for giving in to you. You didn't remember that, although I was weak —yes, weak, and cowardly, I'll admit!—I wasn't the tempter, but you; it was you who wanted it, desired it with all the force of your being,—desperately. I don't say that to justify myself: it's the downright truth, remember that; and I don't want to trouble you by dwelling on my own sacrifice; that's easy enough to bear, because I love you.— I was so peaceful before I saw you again, my life was so happy and calm! I had every possible reason to go on in the same way. My only imaginable excuse—if I have one at all—was the depth and permanence of the passion I thought I had aroused in you—and then almost at once I saw we were mistaken. So here I am ruined for nothing: you are no better off and I am very unhappy.

GEORGES. Don't say that, Thérèse, don't. Forget all I have told you; the words simply came. I don't know what was the matter with me just now.—I love you, I tell you. [*He puts his arm round her waist.*] Don't mind my letter—I'll go, I'll meet you there—I'll arrange it. Don't imagine I suffer, or that I'm saying this to keep you from suffering. Look at me; do I look like a man who is playing a part? Do my eyes lie?—When I have you with me again, when I have you in my arms, next my heart, I am yours, and only yours, as at first.—I'll see you soon!

THÉRÈSE. Thank you, Georges, for your charity. I am not proud, because I love you.

GEORGES. I don't like you to talk like that, Thérèse, and I don't want you to be unhappy.—No, one can't live without doing harm to some one.—Soon, then, dearest?

THÉRÈSE. Yes.

GEORGES. Will you stay?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, I want to see Suzanne.

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GEORGES. Why?

THÉRÈSE. I don't know; I want to see her.

GEORGES. Perhaps you're right. [*He hesitates a moment and goes out.*]

THÉRÈSE. [*Alone.*] So that's it?—After a week!—what a fool I am! Why couldn't I see that what he loved in me was himself, was the sweet sensation of confessing! But why couldn't I leave him? Why did I force him to go on lying, poor soul! If I only had the courage! This last week, it seems as though I have been another person! How can I forget, and become the woman I was before! How can I prevent those who are innocent from suffering!—[*Enter* SUZANNE.] Hello, Suzanne, are you surprised to see me?

SUZANNE. A little.

THÉRÈSE. You've come to see me several times when I wasn't in. I've been very busy lately.— Are you vexed with me? [*She attempts to kiss* SUZANNE.]

SUZANNE. [*Turning away.*] No, please.

THÉRÈSE. Why not?

SUZANNE. Do you ask?—It wasn't I you came to see, was it? As to my husband, you see him quite enough away from here. What did you come for?

THÉRÈSE. What do you mean?

SUZANNE. I detest you—you are my husband's mistress!

THÉRÈSE. I?

SUZANNE. Don't bother to lie. I know; I have done everything in order to know. I've spied on you, intercepted letters—it wasn't very hard to do—you didn't take overmuch trouble to conceal your tracks! Do you recall how virtuously indignant you were two months ago? Well, now you know? Ha! ha! It's funny! Now preach to me!

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THÉRÈSE. What are you going to do?

SUZANNE. Leave, to-night. I have secretly made all my arrangements. You are perfectly free, you'll have the field open to yourselves in an hour's time. That's why I don't show you the door.— Ha! those good, honest people who were so nice and condescending to me! You make a fine showing when you dabble in other people's affairs.— I at least didn't make virtue my specialty, and I wasn't hypocritical. But you have not merely deceived your husband—as I have,—you have betrayed me, in the most perfidious and hateful way—with delicate lies. At the very moment when your virtuous self was preaching to me, you were doing something a hundred times worse than I! You reconciled me to my husband only in order to steal him from me! Keep him! After all, I owe to you a feeling to which I thought I'd lost my right—disgust!—

THÉRÈSE. [*Gently.*] Is that all?

SUZANNE. I was so happy when I came back—I was a fool!—so repentant, so convinced I was in the wrong! The worst of all is that you exploited my repentance. You were both so sure I would leave you in peace! Oh, to see all, guess all, and not even have the right to complain out loud! Once I summoned up courage, once only! And how he took it, how he humiliated me! Oh, I've paid dearly for my slip——

THÉRÈSE. Suzanne!

SUZANNE. Why did you do it? Why did you bring me here, only to torture me?—Liar! Liar and hypocrite!

THÉRÈSE. No, not a hypocrite, I swear! Anything but that! It happened—how can I tell you? Somehow he was so troubled, and—something drove him, after he had been deceived, to deceive in his turn.

SUZANNE. I'm not speaking of him. I don't accuse him; he merely paid me back in my own coin. I'm leaving

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him for that—but you!— If he behaved badly toward me, he may still have loved me—why did *you* take him from me?

THÉRÈSE. I didn't; I allowed myself to be dragged into his own whirlpool of trouble, to soothe his other love, that had been killed. We sympathized together too much, talked too much about you! Yes, about you!—We had too much to say of love, passion, jealousy! It was playing with fire! We were too constantly in one another's company. Our intimacy, engendered by speaking of you, was not realized until it was too late.—Well—there's nothing very original about it—it seemed—fated—you know.

SUZANNE. And I had such confidence in you! You were more than a friend to me, more than a sister. When I was in trouble, I never thought twice about coming to you—you were everything to me.—And it's you—! Thérèse, Thérèse, what have you done!

THÉRÈSE. [*Kneeling.*] You are right, Suzette. I've called myself everything you have called me, and I'm ready to hear more from you, if you feel the better for it.—When I see you cry and listen to you, I take courage. Take advantage of it now, I may be weak to-morrow, when you aren't here, before my eyes. Tell me what to do—I'll do whatever you say. Now I'll tell you just what has happened: I still love him. [*Gesture from* SUZANNE.] It's not my fault! *You* yourself have loved him, deeply! But he doesn't love me any longer, perhaps he never did.—You believe me, don't you? People don't confess such things unless— Do you want to see his latest letter? I can show it to you: there's nothing tender or compromising in it. Here it is; he wrote me that he would not meet me. That was the third, and in each he wrote the same thing. That was the reason I came here; I wanted to speak with him.—What horrible things we said to each other just now! You

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don't believe me? It's true, though. But you'll believe my deeds: I'm the one who is going away to-morrow, this evening, if I can. I'll find some excuse—traveling for my health, anything—Jacques is used to my caprices, and he'll do whatever I tell him, the dear boy! When I'm gone, you will go back to your husband.

SUZANNE. What difference will your going make? You can't give me back my husband—you've changed him into another man, you have shattered my faith in him. He will begin again. Haven't I given him the right to betray me any number of times? What sort of life shall we lead? No, I'd rather go—I'll go.

THÉRÈSE. All right. Just one word. Do you still love him?

SUZANNE. Whom?

THÉRÈSE. Your husband.

SUZANNE. I hate him.

THÉRÈSE. Do you love him? Answer me.— If he still loved you, would you love him in return?

SUZANNE. He doesn't love me.

THÉRÈSE. You've answered.—We shall soon know whether he loves you. Go away, you are right. Will he let you go or not—that is the question. If he keeps you—Good-by, Suzanne, I'm sure now you'll forgive me. [*She leaves.*]

SUZANNE. [*Alone.—She writes.*]

GEORGES. [*Entering.*] To whom are you writing?

SUZANNE. [*Hesitating a moment.*] To you. Read.

GEORGES. [*After having read the letter.*] Do you want to go?

SUZANNE. Yes.

GEORGES. You have decided?

SUZANNE. Yes.

GEORGES. Your reasons——?

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SUZANNE. What's the use? What difference would that make?

GEORGES. Tell me, anyway.

SUZANNE. It's very simple. I once had faith in you; I have lost it. Everything has failed me—my life is over. I don't care what happens to me—only I know that every hour I spend with you now is torture.

GEORGES. Yes, I know.

SUZANNE. I can't explain what you have been for me. When I came back to you, I was almost too happy and full of love—I hoped! I thought you were so good, so great! I gave you my love to keep. You took it only to break it. I was despised and trodden in the dust at the very time perhaps that I was most worth loving.

GEORGES. Yes—it was the same with me.

SUZANNE. I felt the sting of betrayal by the person I most respected and loved—it was so sudden! Abominable! You see, I must go.

GEORGES. No. I too have suffered what you have just described; and yet—I tried to be tender to you.—Here, two months ago—I can still see you—you came to me, trembling and very humble, and you said to me: "Let me live near you; you needn't look at me, only let me be with you." And I took you again, Suzanne——

SUZANNE. Yes, you could, then, because you were better than I. I inspired as much pity as anger in you. But for you to betray me—and with whom!—after having forgiven me! It was betrayal twice over! You two were worse than I had been, for I had such confidence in and respect for you both! No, it isn't the same thing.—I made you suffer, but you have crushed me—I don't know what's the matter with me.— Good-by, Georges!

GEORGES. You are going to stay—you must, I insist on it. No matter what you say, forgiveness is more diffi-

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cult for you than it was for me. I thought—as men do—that I should appear ridiculous in forgiving you. And you don't know how that feels to a man.—You will forgive me, because I adore you—I never loved any one but you.—At this very moment, some one is waiting for me—some one who deserves pity, too, and whom neither you nor I have a right to despise.— Well, the time for the appointment is past, and, you see, I'm still here, at your feet! Do you still think you have the right to leave me?

SUZANNE. But what about to-morrow?

GEORGES. To-morrow, let us begin again to be happy.

SUZANNE. The day after I came back to you before, you called to mind what you had sworn to forget, and you made me suffer agony. Now there are two of us to call up old memories and spy on each other; each of us will be on the rack. Do you want that?

GEORGES. Oh, Suzanne, don't you see that now it is possible to forget? I don't think that, in spite of all, I am worse than many another, but do you want to know the absolute truth? I have gone through the tortures of hell, in flesh and blood—it was more than pride, too. I see it all to-day. But the worst of all was that the visible image of that past was always present. And for that very reason, after my misbehavior, all my anger against you has vanished, as if vengeance had been done.—No, it's not pretty at all!—And the evil is contagious: what you did fascinated and corrupted me.—But, you see, I no longer have the right to be proud and severe with you: we are even. It's not nice, it's shameful to have to admit it—especially for me—and yet I say it with a sigh of relief.—It's a binding link, you see, to have suffered for each other, and to have been equally to blame.—Now, as I speak of it, it seems so long, long ago! There will remain just a tinge of melancholy, and our tenderness will be a little more serious, indulgent.—

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I love you, Suzette.—Come to me! Come to my arms, as you did before this bad dream.—Shall we begin to live once more? Will you—dearest?

SUZANNE. [*Throwing her arms about his neck.*] Ah, Georges!—God have mercy on us!

(*The End.*)

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THE OTHER DANGER

A Comedy in Four Acts

By

MAURICE DONNAY

Translated from the French by

CHARLOTTE TENNEY DAVID

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CHARACTERS

FREYDIÈRES
ETIENNE JADAIN
M. JADAIN, his father
LUYNAIS
HEYBENS
CLÉMENTIER
ERNSTEIN
PRABERT
A YOUNG MAN
DE MEILLAN
CLAIRE (MME. ETIENNE JADAIN)
MME. ERNSTEIN
MME. JADAIN, Etienne's mother
MME. CHENEVAS
MME. LACORTE
MADELEINE
MARIA
MLLE. CHOSCONESCO

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THE OTHER DANGER

ACT I.

[*Paris, in the month of June, at the home of the* ERNSTEINS. *The scene is a garden with large trees, a table, and some light-colored wicker armchairs. Through the trees is seen the front of the house, and through the windows a brilliantly lighted and elegantly furnished salon; near one of the windows stands a piano covered with an old brocade. A French window and a flight of five or six steps, which extends the whole width of the house, lead from the salon to the garden.*

When the curtain rises the butler is seen putting upon the table a tray with a coffee service. From the French window of the salon descend to the garden MME. ERNSTEIN, *on the arm of* ETIENNE JADAIN; CLAIRE JADAIN, *on the arm of* ERNSTEIN, *and behind them* FREYDIÈRES *and* DE MEILLAN.]

MME. ERNSTEIN. I have had the coffee served in the garden, as I thought you would rather take it outside such a hot evening.

ETIENNE. Excellent idea.

CLAIRE. It's a delight to have a park in the very center of Paris.

ERNSTEIN. A park! O, it's hardly a garden!

CLAIRE. It's very large.

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ERNSTEIN. It's very little. You can't see the walls because of the trees; but they are not far away.

ETIENNE. I should be contented with it as it is.

CLAIRE. You have some magnificent trees.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Yes, and a cherry tree, too.

ETIENNE. A *real* cherry tree?

MME. ERNSTEIN. A real cherry tree that has real cherries. We have had twenty-one this year.

ETIENNE. How many?

MME. ERNSTEIN. Twenty-one. My husband has calculated that each cherry has cost us five thousand francs. Isn't that so, Léon?

ERNSTEIN. Yes, five thousand three hundred and sixty-five francs, to be exact.

ETIENNE. At any rate, you should be very happy that it has given you any cherries at all.

CLAIRE. If you can call that *giving*.

ERNSTEIN. [*Repeating complacently.*] Yes, if you can call that giving. [*Patting* JADAIN *on the shoulder.*] Good old Jadain, it's a pleasure to see him again—this old schoolmate. [*To* MME. JADAIN.] Do you come to Paris often, Madame?

CLAIRE. Often, O no! We come once a year about this time, to see my sister, who is married.

ERNSTEIN. [*To* JADAIN.] So you come every year to Paris and I never see you. In the first years after leaving the "Tech." we used to see each other pretty often. You never came to Paris without coming to shake hands with me. From time to time you used to send me news of yourself. Then suddenly, no more news, no more anything—This time, if I hadn't met you by the merest chance——

ETIENNE. What can you expect, old fellow? One drops out of sight—inevitably. Then you were away a long time in Tunis.

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ERNSTEIN. That's true.

ETIENNE. Then I live at Grenoble—and, besides, I'm married.

ERNSTEIN. What a reason! I'm married myself.

ETIENNE. Our situations are so different. *You* have got on in the world—good for you! I knew that you were putting through big deals, that you were launched in important undertakings, and I used to say to myself——

ERNSTEIN. Foolish things, probably. You knew well enough I should always have the greatest pleasure in seeing an old schoolfellow like you—especially if he was a friend—for, after all, we were very intimate at the "Tech." [*At this moment* MME. ERNSTEIN *offers* JADAIN *a glass of liqueur.*]

MME. ERNSTEIN. Monsieur Jadain, some chartreuse, curaçao, cognac?

ETIENNE. Cognac, please.

ERNSTEIN. [*To* CLAIRE.] I regret, Madame, your husband's delay in coming to see me, the more so because it has deferred the pleasure of meeting you.

CLAIRE. You are very kind.

ERNSTEIN. I didn't know Jadain had married so charming a woman, so extremely charming— So you come to Paris only once a year?

CLAIRE. Yes.

ERNSTEIN. That's not very often. You must miss Paris, don't you?

CLAIRE. Not at all.

ERNSTEIN. Anyhow, it misses you.

CLAIRE. You think so?

ERNSTEIN. No question about it. But you are a Parisian?

CLAIRE. No. I am from Vendée.

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ERNSTEIN. Well, I congratulate Vendée. [CLAIRE *smiles and turns to another group.*]

MME. ERNSTEIN. Do you feel the breeze? It begins to be a little cooler.

ERNSTEIN. [*To his wife.*] My dear, you ought to put something on your shoulders. I'm afraid you will take cold.

DE MEILLAN. Your husband is right, Madame. Don't forget that you sing Friday.

MME. ERNSTEIN. [*To her husband.*] That's true. Will you have some one tell Armande to bring me my feather boa? [*Addressing* CLAIRE.] Are you not afraid that the cool air——

CLAIRE. Thank you; there is no danger.

ETIENNE. There's no danger—no danger.

FREYDIÈRES. I see, Madame, you are no more prudent than when you were a girl.

ETIENNE. Ah, when she was a girl she doubtless obeyed her parents; but I haven't any authority over her.

CLAIRE. If you listen to my husband's complaints you are "in for it." But they are new for you; for me they are an old story. I'm going away.

FREYDIÈRES. Stay at least to defend yourself.

CLAIRE. I prefer to count on you. [*She joins the group formed by* MME. ERNSTEIN, ERNSTEIN, *and* DE MEILLAN.]

ETIENNE. My wife didn't think, in coming here, she would find a childhood friend.

FREYDIÈRES. Of course not.

ETIENNE. You were brought up together, so to speak?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes. You know what life in a little town in the provinces is, where you see each other often—Our parents' houses were near each other—side by side, in fact.

ETIENNE. Clisson is a pretty town.

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FREYDIÈRES. It's a charming old town, but, unfortunately, it's becoming modern so fast!

ETIENNE. You were not at our wedding, were you?

FREYDIÈRES. No, I wasn't there.

ETIENNE. I thought so. I don't recall having seen you, though I remember very well having been introduced to your parents.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I was at Paris; that very day I was taking an examination in law.

ETIENNE. Your parents are well?

FREYDIÈRES. My mother is dead.

ETIENNE. Well, you've become pretty well known since those days.

FREYDIÈRES. [*Modestly.*] Oh!

ETIENNE. Every time you have pleaded a much-talked-of case we have read your name in the papers: Attorney Freydières! and I have said to my wife, "You see, your childhood friend has become a celebrated lawyer." [*Meanwhile* ARMANDE, *her maid, has brought a boa and placed it around the shoulders of* MME. ERNSTEIN.]

MME. ERNSTEIN. How hot it has been to-day! And we are not through with it, either. It looks as if we were going to have an abominable summer.

FREYDIÈRES. How is that?

MME. ERNSTEIN. Spots have been seen on the sun.

ERNSTEIN. O, the nasty fellow!

MME. ERNSTEIN. It's terrible to stay in Paris in such weather.

CLAIRE. Are you obliged to stay?

MME. ERNSTEIN. Yes—that is to say, there is to be a charity fête at the end of the week at the home of the Duchess de Mortagne and a garden party with theatricals.

FREYDIÈRES. That will be a pleasure.

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MME. ERNSTEIN. And I have to sing a duet with Monsieur de Meillan. After that I go to the country.

FREYDIÈRES. The country—a mere notion! Paris is a hundred times better, with such a house as you have. What's the use of leaving it to go to Touraine, where it is much warmer than here?

MME. ERNSTEIN. That's true.

FREYDIÈRES. And this evening; see how calm it is, what silence! You might think you were far from Paris. You have flowers, trees—a cherry tree—and you hear the birds sing.

ERNSTEIN. We have also three goldfish in a little marble basin.

FREYDIÈRES. What more do you want? That's country enough.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Do you love goldfish, Madame?

CLAIRE. Well, I'm not carried away by them!

MME. ERNSTEIN. I adore them; I dote on them; I think they are perfect dears. [*Dreamily.*] Often I amuse myself for hours looking at them and wondering what they can be thinking about.

FREYDIÈRES. And you?

MME. ERNSTEIN. I think *you* are insolent. Do you stay in Paris for some time, Madame?

CLAIRE. We leave to-morrow morning.

MME. ERNSTEIN. So soon! You live at Grenoble, I believe?

CLAIRE. Yes, Grenoble.

MME. ERNSTEIN. I don't know Grenoble at all. Is it pretty?

CLAIRE. Yes, for a provincial town.

FREYDIÈRES. They manufacture gloves there, and they have raised a statue to Monsieur Jouvin, while they have not even a bust of Stendhal!

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MME. ERNSTEIN. What about it?

FREYDIÈRES. What about it? That's all.

MME. ERNSTEIN. O, I thought you were going to tell a story.

FREYDIÈRES. You may be sure not.

MME. ERNSTEIN. It's odd to speak, yet say nothing.

FREYDIÈRES. Isn't it?

MME. ERNSTEIN. And must you go away to-morrow?

CLAIRE. Yes, my husband has only two weeks off; he must be in his office Friday morning.

ERNSTEIN. [*To* JADAIN.] They keep you pretty hard at work, then?

ETIENNE. You're right, they do. I have just one month's vacation, which I take in two parts— You know very well what a big concern is; you are not at all your own master; you must be there, even if there is not much to do; above all, you must not displease the chief.

ERNSTEIN. But you ought not to tremble any more before them; you ought to have a position in the railroad service which would give you more freedom——

ETIENNE. No, not at all; advancement is very slow in these big concerns unless you have some "pull." Then it goes easily enough. O, it's not a brilliant career—you have many disappointments and many disillusionments.

ERNSTEIN. Are you still making bridges?

ETIENNE. Yes, bridges, stations, freight depots, warehouses—in fact, the rough drafts for all the work in my territory.

ERNSTEIN. Do you like it?

ETIENNE. O, not extremely; it's always the same thing—mere routine; you get into a rut. Without being envious, I can't help saying it's not worth the trouble of leading my class at the "Tech.," only to be outstripped by the others.

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ERNSTEIN. That's true—you were at the head of your class.

ETIENNE. Yes, but you see it hasn't done me much good.

ERNSTEIN. I remember, you were a very remarkable student. By the way, it was you who helped me with my thesis, and it's thanks to you that I received my diploma of engineer—next to the lowest in the class, to be sure.

FREYDIÈRES. Ah, so you were not the lowest?

ERNSTEIN. Oh, if I wasn't, it was because my uncle belonged to the board of trustees. Out of consideration for him——

FREYDIÈRES. I have a little cousin in a Catholic college. He is always the twenty-second in a class of twenty-three. One day I asked him who was the twenty-third. He replied that it was a boy who was only a myth.

ETIENNE. How's that?

FREYDIÈRES. The good fathers had invented a pupil to save my little cousin's being the lowest. In this way the child was not discouraged and his parents were not humiliated.

ERNSTEIN. Well, they treated me like your little cousin.

FREYDIÈRES. So you *were* the lowest?

ETIENNE. That hasn't hindered you from succeeding.

FREYDIÈRES. Bless me, no! otherwise he wouldn't have boasted of it with so much zest.

ERNSTEIN. Zest?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, it's perfectly natural; if a person has passed for a dunce with all his fellows, he's mighty glad to disprove it, especially before the head of the class.

ETIENNE. Especially if the head of the class has gone to the foot.

FREYDIÈRES. That's not an absolute truth; but, generally, life pays little heed to the rank given in school.

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Commencement, as the name implies, is not the finish, but the start. It has always reminded me of a bicycle contest where two hundred competitors are entered; they have to be put in several rows and draw numbers for the start; but the last row has just as many chances as the first, for the course is long and attended with all sorts of difficulties: rapid ascent, dizzy descent, dangerous turns, and the like.

ETIENNE. There is necessarily, nowadays, much overcrowding in all careers. And then, above all, there is luck—luck! To think of the rapid, the astounding career of some of the fellows! By the way, do you remember Devigny?

ERNSTEIN. Yes, I do.

ETIENNE. He wasn't a wonder.

ERNSTEIN. I don't remember him as a wonder.

FREYDIÈRES. You would have, certainly.

ETIENNE. Well, here's a man for you—after finishing school he got a job in Lille as draftsman with a manufacturer of steam engines, who had some daughters. Devigny was a fine-looking fellow. The eldest daughter took notice of him—even a little too much notice—and he was obliged to marry her.—The father-in-law has died since and his son-in-law is now at the head of a splendid factory.

FREYDIÈRES. Lucky fellow!

ETIENNE. That's a fine story, I know—a fine story; but it's simply to show you how people succeed nowadays.

ERNSTEIN. You mustn't generalize.

ETIENNE. Devigny made the best of his fine figure—but how explain the success of a man like Harduc? Think of it, Harduc! the last person in the world you would think of!

FREYDIÈRES. Who is this Harduc?

ETIENNE. Imagine the most mediocre boy, who didn't know and couldn't understand the least thing. At the last Exposition, by means of intrigues and with some

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pull, he obtained a few trifling jobs; among others, one to build a waffle stand, which he put on a rock in the middle of a little pond. With the first gust of wind the kiosk tumbled into the water. Now he is a government architect, decorated, loaded with honors—all because he is his father's son. How many others like him I could cite! But, you know, you have only to run over the names in the Year Book of the Alumni Association—it's most enlightening.

FREYDIÈRES. The Year Book—I believe you. It's a fine book, full of marvelous instruction. By observing the place where the others are, you can tell exactly where you are yourself. Excellent exercise in comparison! One is proud of the progress one has made; one is sorry for those who have remained behind in an inferior situation—their proper place. One pities these, but one is indignant at those who have reached the highest places—at least one is astonished, and it's the sum of these feelings—contempt, egoism, jealousy, and even hatred—which constitutes, properly speaking, *good fellowship.*

ERNSTEIN. There is some truth in what you say. [*A silence.*]

ETIENNE. And your cousin, the contractor, Georges Ernstein; what has become of him?

ERNSTEIN. My poor cousin has had no luck; he has lost all his money; besides, he has no health and so is unable to get on his feet again.

ETIENNE. Ah? It's quite recent?

ERNSTEIN. O, about two months ago.

ETIENNE. What about his company?

ERNSTEIN. I have taken it over. I had loaned him two hundred thousand francs. I didn't care to lose it, and so I couldn't let him fail. Besides, he is my cousin; we have the same name. It was the only means of saving the concern from being resold on disastrous terms.

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ETIENNE. You did the right thing.

ERNSTEIN. So now you see me at the head of the steel works. By the way, I have to find somebody to take charge of the technical side of the business, for I—you know— You don't happen to know any one?

ETIENNE. Well, no.

ERNSTEIN. I've just had an idea! Since you don't seem satisfied with your situation in the railroad company, why shouldn't you come with me?

ETIENNE. Come with you—how?

ERNSTEIN. As associate director. You would have a fixed salary and a share in the profits. I'm sure we should agree. Later you could buy me out. Well, what do you say to that?

ETIENNE. I don't know— Your proposal is rather sudden. [*He looks at* CLAIRE.]

ERNSTEIN. You look at your wife— You are right. One must always look at one's wife, especially when she is pretty. Come, now, what do you think of it, Madame?

CLAIRE. O, in such questions, my husband is the only judge. At any rate, he must think it over.

ERNSTEIN. Think over what? I know Jadain. He's an old schoolmate, a friend. I know his worth.

CLAIRE. Do you think this new kind of work will be suited to him? It requires some experience, doesn't it?

ETIENNE. But, my dear, I should do for Ernstein what I have been doing for the last twelve years in the railroad business. It's the same kind of work— It's just what I'm doing all the time; I know the business.

ERNSTEIN. And then, with you, I could do some very interesting things. For instance, to begin with, I'm on excellent terms with Harduc.

ETIENNE. The man of the waffle-stand?

ERNSTEIN. Yes. Through him I shall get some im-

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portant jobs for the Exposition, where he's one of the "big guns." You see, it's best not to say anything bad about him.

ETIENNE. [*Very sincerely.*] But I didn't say anything bad about him. His stand fell into the water; that might happen to any one.

ERNSTEIN. I say again, there are some very interesting things to do. Come with me to my room. I'll show you the plans. Harduc has loaned them to me just lately. You can look them over; that won't commit you to anything.

ETIENNE. All right. [*The two men go towards the house, still talking.*]

[*During the preceding conversation* MME. ERNSTEIN *and* M. DE MEILLAN, *quite apart from the others, have kept up a continual conversation in an undertone.*]

FREYDIÈRES. [*To* CLAIRE.] Do you know that Ernstein already considers the matter as settled?

CLAIRE. He is going a little fast.

FREYDIÈRES. He is like that in everything. When his decisions are bad, he has at least the excuse of having made them quickly.

CLAIRE. That's no excuse.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Why, what has become of the other gentlemen?

FREYDIÈRES. It's surprising how you follow the conversation!

MME. ERNSTEIN. I wasn't interested in what you were saying.

FREYDIÈRES. The gentlemen are examining the plans for the next Exposition. Your husband has some great projects in mind.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Ah! [*Silence.*] Look here, Meillan; you know you are not here to amuse yourself. We have to work.

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FREYDIÈRES. What are you going to do?

MME. ERNSTEIN. We are going to rehearse the duet we have to sing Friday at the Duchess de Mortagne's garden party.

FREYDIÈRES. After dinner! You won't have any voice.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Nevertheless, we must rehearse; we haven't much more time—Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—only four days, and Meillan is never free during the day. You can never put your hand on him.

FREYDIÈRES. It's a mystery where he spends his afternoons.

MME. ERNSTEIN. I'm going to profit by his being here. [*To* CLAIRE.] You see, Madame, I don't stand on ceremony. Will you excuse me?

CLAIRE. Certainly, Madame. Please don't mind me.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Besides, as we are going to sing out of doors at the Duchess's, you can do us a service by telling us if you can hear us from here, if our voices carry well. Will you be so kind?

FREYDIÈRES. Certainly. What are you going to sing?

MME. ERNSTEIN. The duet, "Poems of Love." Are you coming, Meillan?

M. DE MEILLAN. I am at your service, Madame. [*They go towards the house.*]

FREYDIÈRES. The way in which Mme. Ernstein gets rid of us by asking us to remain where we are is certainly rather free and easy.

CLAIRE. That's all perfectly natural.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes— Well! what do you think of M. de Meillan?

CLAIRE. Distinguished—very fine-looking.

FREYDIÈRES. So much for the physical appearance.

CLAIRE. I can't judge of him in other respects. He hasn't opened his mouth.

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FREYDIÈRES. He doesn't open it except to sing. But, to be fair, he sings very well.

CLAIRE. Yes?

FREYDIÈRES. You are going to hear him. It's by his singing also that he has touched the heart of Mme. Ernstein. You know, she is madly in love with him.

CLAIRE. Why do you say that?

FREYDIÈRES. Because it's the truth, as you have seen yourself.

CLAIRE. I? Not at all.

FREYDIÈRES. Really?

CLAIRE. No, I assure you. It's not in me to suspect evil like that without knowing it. And even supposing it is true, it's strange for you to speak so lightly and before any one of a love which may be this woman's life and which she believes is a secret.

FREYDIÈRES. In the first place, you are not, for me, "any one," and I speak of it lightly to you because it is the proper way to speak of light things. Finally, it's no secret. Mme. Ernstein doesn't conceal this liaison; not enough even—she almost advertises it. You see how little she was disturbed by you, whom she saw for the first time this evening. She is a woman who is neglected by her husband, and she consoles herself.

CLAIRE. It is very unfortunate.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, it is unfortunate. She was charming, this little Mme. Ernstein, when she was married. She loved her husband, asking only that he remain faithful to her to the end; but Ernstein has not done what he ought in this respect. Then she sought distraction. She was a musician; she had a good voice, and so she threw herself heart and soul into music.

CLAIRE. She has gone into music as one goes into religion.

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FREYDIÈRES. About the same thing. And what might be expected has happened—she has met the *tenor*—the tenor!

CLAIRE. And then, she has no child.

FREYDIÈRES. That wouldn't have hindered her.

CLAIRE. If she had loved this child?

FREYDIÈRES. You think, then, that one cannot be a mother and a lover at the same time?

CLAIRE. At the same time—no; one would have to choose.

FREYDIÈRES. What do you know about it?

CLAIRE. That's true; in fact, I don't know anything about it.

FREYDIÈRES. You have children?

CLAIRE. I have a big daughter.

FREYDIÈRES. O, so big as that?—

CLAIRE. She is already twelve years old——

FREYDIÈRES. Your daughter is pretty?

CLAIRE. How do you want me to answer you? For me—yes, she is very pretty; but to you she would perhaps appear insignificant.

FREYDIÈRES. She looks like you?

CLAIRE. So they say.

FREYDIÈRES. Then you do not believe a word of what you say.

CLAIRE. You are right. I'm being modest, and that is absurd, for it is not because she is my daughter——

FREYDIÈRES. [*Smiling.*] Of course.

CLAIRE. But she is adorable.

FREYDIÈRES. Then she is pretty.

CLAIRE. Strange— Oh, no! oh, no!—she is too—how shall I say?—unusual. Yes, that's it, unusual. Then, too, she has a delicate soul, a loving heart——

FREYDIÈRES. What is her name?

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CLAIRE. Madeleine. [*At this moment are heard the opening chords of the first duet of the "Poems of Love."*]

FREYDIÈRES. What a funny thing life is!— Only this morning——

CLAIRE. What about this morning?

FREYDIÈRES. I'll tell you that later; let us wait until this duet is over——

[*They hear the voice of* DE MEILLAN, *who commences:*]

Ouvre tes yeux bleus, ma mignonne,
Voici le jour!

[*Then the voice of* MME. ERNSTEIN, *who finishes:*]

Et le grand soleil qui nous brûle
Est dans mon cœur!

CLAIRE. Madame Ernstein has a pretty voice.

FREYDIÈRES. I'm not the one to whom to tell it; you must say it to her. It will give her a great deal of pleasure.

MME. ERNSTEIN. [*Comes to the window of the salon.*] Can you hear us?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I should say we could!

CLAIRE. It's charming.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Then it sounds well?

CLAIRE. Very well.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Where are you? I don't see you.

FREYDIÈRES. We are exactly where you left us. We have not stirred.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Still I don't see you.

FREYDIÈRES. There are some shrubs hiding us.

MME. ERNSTEIN. And do you see us?

FREYDIÈRES. No, not at all.

[MME. ERNSTEIN *goes back into the room.*

CLAIRE. Why did you say that, when we see them very well through the foliage?

FREYDIÈRES. Why did I say that? [M. DE MEILLAN

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and MME. ERNSTEIN *are seen kissing.*] Wait! Look!—For *that!*

CLAIRE. [*Laughing.*] Oh! but this is treason!

FREYDIÈRES. It's complicity. One must always protect lovers.

CLAIRE. How imprudent they are! Her husband in the other room—and we here seeing them.—A servant might come——

FREYDIÈRES. They are not thinking of all that. [M. DE MEILLAN *and* MME. ERNSTEIN *kiss.*]

CLAIRE. It's very amusing. The music has stopped.

FREYDIÈRES. Another kind begins. I said to you just now, "What a funny thing life is!" Here we are, both of us, this evening, in this garden. I didn't know, in coming here to dinner, that I should meet you.

CLAIRE. Didn't you?

FREYDIÈRES. Ernstein telephoned me this morning to come to dinner with De Meillan and one of his old schoolmates, whose name he did not tell me. Then, when I entered the salon and saw you, I felt myself grow pale. You must certainly have seen it.

CLAIRE. No, I didn't notice it.

FREYDIÈRES. You may not have noticed it, but to see you here, after thirteen years,—it was the whole period of my youth suddenly revived. During all the dinner, I was looking at you. You have not changed.

CLAIRE. You are very kind.

FREYDIÈRES. Of course, the young girl I knew has become a woman, but with you, it has not been a transformation, as with others; no, it is a continuation; it is a different thing and yet the same. That profound expression, the alluring sweetness of your voice, the harmony of your movements,—all that makes up your infinite grace,—nothing of that has changed. Then a host of feelings

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that I believed, or, rather, that were only—at any rate, I'm all upset! But you—you?

CLAIRE. I?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, you. It hasn't affected you to see me again?

CLAIRE. I was surprised.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, you were surprised, at first—but now?

CLAIRE. It gives me pleasure.

FREYDIÈRES. [*Bluntly.*] Oh, you don't say the right word.

CLAIRE. I say what I think. But you speak rather brusquely to me.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh!

CLAIRE. You would make me believe— Really I don't know— I——

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I know what you are thinking—that I have no right to speak to you in this way. There has never been anything between us. No; evidently there has been nothing in the ordinary sense in which it is understood. There has been nothing, and yet there has been everything. We passed six years together in the tenderest and warmest intimacy. There were my dreams—my hopes, my desires. It is impossible that you have forgotten all that.

CLAIRE. It was a child's love affair, just like so many others.

FREYDIÈRES. You were not a child; six months after, you married Monsieur Jadain. I didn't wish to be present at the wedding. Besides,—I hated you.

CLAIRE. [*Smiling.*] I hope now you have forgiven me.

FREYDIÈRES. I don't know.

CLAIRE. But you couldn't have married me—you were so young.

FREYDIÈRES. That's true; we are the same age.

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CLAIRE. You are even a year younger than I.

FREYDIÈRES. However, you must believe that the impression made by a young girl upon a heart of eighteen may be deep, ineffaceable. It's foolish, what I'm saying, isn't it? Oh, I know it perfectly! Well, what do you think?

CLAIRE. I think—I think—why, I think just now you are under the influence of auto-suggestion, and that my sudden presence has drawn for a little while, from the oblivion where it was properly buried, your first and now distant love affair.

FREYDIÈRES. Well, you're mistaken. I have never forgotten you, and you should believe me—for, to overcome the shame which I feel in saying things to you which may appear so commonplace, I must feel that I am perfectly sincere. Otherwise, it would be too easy and ridiculous—and useless, since you go away to-morrow, and I may, perhaps, never see you again. Don't you see, from this very fact that we have been brought up together, that we have seen the same horizons, there are between us a thousand bonds of feeling which unite us more closely than we ourselves think? Distant as this first love may seem to you, I have remained faithful to it.

CLAIRE. You are going a little too far.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, faithful in memory.

CLAIRE. Oh!

FREYDIÈRES. Of course, I have had some liaisons, but none very dangerous.

CLAIRE. Mlle. Blanche Guillot, for example.

FREYDIÈRES. But how do you know about that?

CLAIRE. Oh, you are famous—celebrated. People talk about you.

FREYDIÈRES. That's very fine.

CLAIRE. No; I'm teasing you. I learned this by chance,

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two years ago, while I was staying in Paris. We went to see a play in which this person was playing, and between the acts some people were speaking of her. In a box next to ours, some one said, "She is with Freydières." That's all. You seem displeased?—I am talking of something that doesn't concern me?

FREYDIÈRES. Not at all—not at all! That's ancient history. Besides, she looks like you. I don't say that in defense of my cause; you were able to prove it yourself, since you saw her.

CLAIRE. It's true. Doubtless, that is what you mean by your fidelity.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes; there are some men who, in certain circumstances and under certain different forms, remain faithful to the same ideal—to the same type of woman.

CLAIRE. It's dangerous for those who love such men: they have to fear all the women who resemble them.

FREYDIÈRES. It's less dangerous than if they had to fear all the women who don't. There are many more of *them*.

CLAIRE. Evidently.

FREYDIÈRES. But, to return to what we were saying just now—often a person who would like to forget, cannot; even if he should not keep his love for a certain woman, a thousand images of her remain in his brain, that a strain of music, a perfume, a bit of sky, a tree, a word, the most insignificant of outward circumstances, call up with extraordinary vividness. Some people are endowed with a special memory, with a sentimental memory. It is so with me: I cannot hear any tune that you have played, without being plunged into melancholy—a profound regret. And then I see you in the salon of the old house at Clisson, the white and gold salon with the red velvet furniture, and on the mantelpiece the elephant in bronze that carried on its back a clock surmounted by a gilded cupid. I see you

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seated at the piano. I could describe the very gown you had on that day, to the last ribbon.

CLAIRE. It's strange!

FREYDIÈRES. Very strange!

CLAIRE. Should I have said something else?

FREYDIÈRES. No, no,—just what you did,—"It's strange." For instance, five years ago, after your marriage, when my father died—in taking him to the cemetery we followed the sunken road, called the "Hollow," where we have walked so often together.

CLAIRE. Oh, yes, I remember it.

FREYDIÈRES. It was a summer morning. Why did I suddenly recall another morning like it, when you and I were following the same road? It was the first time you used the perfume which you still use, do you not? I recognized it.

CLAIRE. Yes.

FREYDIÈRES. You had used too much.

CLAIRE. It is often that way when one begins.

FREYDIÈRES. And you attracted a swarm of wasps, intoxicated by the scent. I was very busy chasing them;—you laughed—you were not afraid. You wore a cotton dress. The groundwork was white, and had little bunches of pinks scattered over it. You had a large white hat, trimmed with hollyhocks and some lace that fell from it.

CLAIRE. Yes, that's true; I remember.

FREYDIÈRES. Well, in these terrible circumstances, while I was walking behind my father's coffin, I was thinking of you! It is strange, isn't it? And on an evening like this, do you think I need have you near me in order to recall other mild and starry nights, when we sat in the garden, side by side, and I held your hand in the darkness? Just to hold this little hand that I adore—the very key of your soul—made it seem that I possessed you entirely.

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[*He takes her hand during these last words.*] Of what are you thinking?

CLAIRE. I'm thinking of what you are saying. I did not know that you loved me so.

FREYDIÈRES. And that gives you pleasure?

CLAIRE. I find it very sweet. I am much moved—much disturbed.

FREYDIÈRES. Truly?

CLAIRE. Yes; but what good does it do to talk about it? Of what use is it to call up the past in this way? To-morrow I take up again my quiet life with my daughter whom I adore, and my husband——

FREYDIÈRES. Whom you esteem.

CLAIRE. Whom I love—yes, sincerely.

[*Meantime, in the salon,* MME. ERNSTEIN *and* M. DE MEILLAN, *ceasing their love making, have decided to sing the last duet of "Poems of Love." They sing together:*]

"Oh! ne finis jamais, nuit clémente et divine!"

FREYDIÈRES. But you can return to Paris. You have just heard Ernstein offer you the means to do it, and I'm sure you have enough influence with Monsieur Jadain——

CLAIRE. Oh, no—no, no! Paris frightens me. Every time I come, I am so glad to be here. The first few days, it's a kind of fever—a veritable intoxication; I love the noise, the bustle. And then, pretty soon, a great weariness comes over me—an indefinable sadness in feeling myself alone in this crowd—all alone—all alone!

FREYDIÈRES. Alone? Doesn't your husband come with you?

CLAIRE. Why, yes!

FREYDIÈRES. Ah! [*Silence.*] Yes, that is the sensation one feels in certain cities, when one comes alone and without love; then the joy of others becomes insupportable. There are some mornings in the spring when the

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clerk and the milliner who pass, holding hands and smiling at each other, are young gods one is jealous of; and certain holiday evenings, the whole city may be illuminated and aglow, but it appears gloomy, if one does not carry one's own illumination within.

CLAIRE. But it seems gloomier still when there are two, and one of the two, amid the pulsating life about her, has only the bitter sweetness of faith kept—the keen satisfaction of duty done.

FREYDIÈRES. Claire!

CLAIRE. Don't mind me! Don't mind me! I'm a coward. I have no right to complain. I'm very happy. I have only to go back to my home in a little country town to find again tranquillity and a certain happiness.

FREYDIÈRES. A happiness to which you are resigned.

CLAIRE. No, but one that I choose—that I accept freely, appreciating all its value.

FREYDIÈRES. There is another happiness, however: loving and being loved.

CLAIRE. Hush, hush! What you are doing is wrong! You are taking advantage of a moment of frankness, of weakness.

FREYDIÈRES. I beg your pardon.

[*During these last words,* JADAIN *and* ERNSTEIN *have come down the steps into the garden.*]

ETIENNE. Oh, certainly; it's very interesting; I'm certainly tempted.

ERNSTEIN. Then it's settled. To-morrow I'm going to lunch with Harduc. After lunch, I shall have the order.

ETIENNE. Claire, do you know what time it is?

CLAIRE. I haven't any idea.

ETIENNE. Midnight. You must get ready.

CLAIRE. I should think so!

ERNSTEIN. It's not late.

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FREYDIÈRES. At Grenoble, at this hour, the ladybugs have been abed a long time.

CLAIRE. Don't laugh at me.

MME. ERNSTEIN. [*Descending the steps.*] Madame, will you take a cup of tea—or some iced drink? It's all ready, in the little drawing-room.

ETIENNE. It's only——

MME. ERNSTEIN. Oh, no! You're not going to leave the tea on my hands. Léon, insist!

ERNSTEIN. In a minute, my dear, we'll follow you. I have only a word to say to Madame Jadain.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Say it, then. [*To* JADAIN *and to* FREYDIÈRES.] Are you coming?

[FREYDIÈRES *and* JADAIN *go up the steps towards the house.* ERNSTEIN *and* MADAME JADAIN *remain alone.*]

ERNSTEIN. It's too bad you must go away to-morrow morning, but I count on seeing you again soon.

CLAIRE. Next year.

ERNSTEIN. Next year? Sooner, sooner! I have just been talking very seriously with your husband. I have worked for you. In two months it is more than probable that you will be settled in Paris.

CLAIRE. What? Then it has been decided—off-hand?

ERNSTEIN. Yes, certainly.

CLAIRE. Indeed!

ERNSTEIN. You don't seem pleased?

CLAIRE. New things always frighten me.

ERNSTEIN. What are you afraid of?

CLAIRE. I don't know—everything. First, you do not know Etienne; he is a little difficult;—perhaps he will not get along with you.

ERNSTEIN. People always get along with me, and no one ever risks anything in entering into partnership with a man who is lucky. Before taking any one into his serv-

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ice, Mazarin always used to ask, "Is he lucky?" And you'll admit Mazarin is an authority.

CLAIRE. I'll not dispute it.

ERNSTEIN. Now, then, I am happy; at the same time with my own fortune, I have always made the fortune of those whom I have interested in my business.

CLAIRE. Oh! fortune!

ERNSTEIN. It's a thing to be considered, however. You are not going to hinder Etienne from accepting the position I'm offering him, I hope?

CLAIRE. No—and if he intends to accept, nothing I could say would hinder him in the least.

ERNSTEIN. How you say that! I don't understand you. I assure you that what I propose to your husband is not to be despised,—and everybody should seize an opportunity when it comes,—it comes only once. No one has a right to remain in an ordinary position—or at least, modest—when he can fill a more brilliant one: he should always try to better himself—to rise. Come, don't look like that. Truly, I thought I was telling you good news.

CLAIRE. I beg your pardon. But this decision, taken so suddenly, so unluckily—yes, so unluckily—and then, so many occurrences have come to surprise me this evening. . . .

ERNSTEIN. So many occurrences!—There is only one—and that the simplest. . . .

CLAIRE. The simplest! No, it is a complete change in life.

ERNSTEIN. All the same, you will have a gayer one, more lively, more in accordance with your tastes. Just think—a woman like you at Grenoble! Why, it's to be out of the world! While here, we shall amuse you, entertain you, make a great deal of you. Have you been bored this evening?

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CLAIRE. Oh, no.

ERNSTEIN. Well, then, every evening will be the same. Now, come take a cup of tea. [*He offers her his arm.*] Upon my soul! you are actually trembling. [*While they are going toward the salon the curtain falls.*]

ACT II.

[*Paris, four years later, at the home of the* JADAINS. *A little drawing-room with a window at the left; a door at the back opens into* ETIENNE'S *study; a door at the right leads into the rest of the apartment. When the curtain rises,* ETIENNE *and his father, seated at a table, are playing cards;* MME. JADAIN, ETIENNE'S *mother, is in an armchair, reading the paper.* MADELEINE *is making a portrait of her grandmother.* MME. CHENEVAS, CLAIRE'S *sister, is busy with some work.* MME. JADAIN, *about sixty years old, is a commonplace, country-bred woman.* MADELEINE *is a young girl of sixteen.*]

JADAIN. [*Throwing his cards down on the table, in bad humor.*] There's nothing to be done with this hand. May I draw?

ETIENNE. [*Resolutely.*] No.

JADAIN. Of course.

MADELEINE. [*Laughing.*] Of course, Grandpa; you don't conceal your disappointment enough; then Papa sees at once you have a poor hand, and he'll not let you draw.

JADAIN. Evidently.

ETIENNE. Besides, I have the king,

JADAIN. He is a fine man.

ETIENNE. That gives me four. Here is my hand. [*He shows his cards.*]

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JADAIN. You have won again. Shall we play another game?

ETIENNE. No, father; I have to work.—And then I must confess I am not fond of écarté.

MADELEINE. Oh, Papa, you are sorry not to have your Freydières to play a game of checkers with?

ETIENNE. Yes, I miss him a good deal. Well, I'm going to work.

MME. JADAIN. Directly after your lunch, like that? It's bad for your digestion. Never take any rest?

ETIENNE. Never, Mother, never. [*He goes into his study.*]

JADAIN. Where is your mother?

MADELEINE. I don't know; she must be in her room.

JADAIN. What are you doing there, my pet?

MADELEINE. I'm doing Grandma's portrait.

JADAIN. Aha! You are learning to draw now?

MADELEINE. *Now!* I've been learning for four years. I began when we came to Paris.

JADAIN. Oh, did you? I had forgotten. [*He goes near the window.*] Don't you find it stifling here?

MADELEINE. The draft of the furnace is closed.

JADAIN. All the same, it's much too warm; they overheat the apartments here in Paris. [*He walks up and down, whistling the air of the chorus of old men in "Faust."*]

MME. JADAIN. I beg you, my dear, not to whistle like that; it's unendurable when one is reading. You are like a soul in torture. I don't understand how you can endure to be so idle.

JADAIN. I feel dull.

MME. JADAIN. You feel dull!—you feel dull! Do something,—read.

JADAIN. You monopolize the paper.

MME. JADAIN. Here, take it!

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JADAIN. I've already read it.

MME. JADAIN. Then go for a walk.

JADAIN. Thanks.

MME. JADAIN. Yes, go for a walk; take a little turn; that will divert you.

JADAIN. In such weather? It is raining hard.

MADELEINE. So it is. Freydières would say, "If it begins at this hour, it will rain all day." And he would add, "But it comes down too hard to last." [*She laughs.*]

MME. JADAIN. What is there funny in that? It is what everybody says.

MADELEINE. Exactly—it is what everybody says.

MME. JADAIN. It must be that I am not in the secret.

MADELEINE. Grandpa, I have an idea: to-day is Thursday, and it's New Year's week.—What if you should go to a matinée?

JADAIN. Good idea! Give me some advice, my pet.

MADELEINE. Oh, there's a matinée at the Folies-Bergère, for the children.

JADAIN. Aha!

MME. JADAIN. That's just right for him.

MADELEINE. There *is a place to promenade;* you could walk there.

JADAIN. Well, that's it—that's it. You won't come with me, Cloto?

MME. JADAIN. Call me *Clotilde;* at our age, such baby names are ridiculous. No, my dear, I shall not go with you; I have some errands to do; I must go to the Bon Marché.

MADELEINE. [*Taking the paper.*] Do you want to see something sad, or gay? Do you want to hear music?

JADAIN. What are they playing at the Opéra Comique?

MADELEINE. *The Black Domino.* That's pretty. *The*

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Black Domino! [*She hums the air, "I hear the dance commencing."*]

JADAIN. You needn't make fun of it; it is very pretty music.

MADELEINE. But I'm not making fun, Grandpapa, I respect all your opinions.

JADAIN. I'd like to see *The Black Domino,* but to sit still for three hours, without moving!

[MME. JADAIN *throws up her hands in sign of impatience.*]

JADAIN. Well, I'm going. [*He goes towards* ETIENNE'S *office.*]

MME. JADAIN. Where are you going?

JADAIN. I'm going to say good-by to my son.

MME. JADAIN. Etienne is working. Don't disturb him, since you are coming back so soon.

JADAIN. You're right.—I'm going just the same to bid him good-by. [*He goes in.*]

MADELEINE. Poor Grandpapa! He feels dull. But for the few days you come to spend with us at New Year's, he ought to be glad to see us, and not find the time long.

MME. JADAIN. He has been like this since he gave up his business. But at Grenoble, he has his friends, his societies, his club; here, he has nothing.

MADELEINE. Isn't it funny to be like that? I don't know what it is to feel dull.

MME. JADAIN. Oh, for you, it is not the same thing; you are young.

MADELEINE. The days pass. I don't even have time to notice them.

MME. JADAIN. And then you have a very gay disposition.

MADELEINE. Oh, *very* gay!—That depends. I can be very sad, too, when I choose.

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MME. JADAIN. When you *choose?*

MADELEINE. Yes, I love to be sad, and as I have no reason whatever for being so, I amuse myself by going through exercises in sadness.

MME. JADAIN. It's rather a peculiar amusement. I should like to know, for instance, how you go about your "exercises in sadness."

MADELEINE. It's very easy: I stay in my room without a light, when it's growing dark; twilight itself is full of an infinite melancholy.—Then sad thoughts come of themselves.

MME. JADAIN. What a funny little girl you are! But who has taught you that?

MADELEINE. Father Conderam. You know—the one who preached during the Retreat, the year of my first communion. In the evening, in the church, he made us kneel, and then told us to meditate.

MME. JADAIN. That's a thing that does not come at command.

MADELEINE. Well, we meditated, just the same: we thought of death and the last judgment,—in the church where only one little lamp burned,—and we all came out trembling.

MME. JADAIN. No wonder! Especially you, who were in a state of exaltation then. That lasted a rather long time; you even wanted to become a nun.

MADELEINE. At a certain age, all little girls whose imagination is rather lively think that they have this calling. You must have felt the same.

MME. JADAIN. [*With pride.*] Never!

MADELEINE. [*Scrutinizing her.*] Perhaps,—but I'm sure that Aunt Alice, when she was thirteen or fourteen wanted to be a nun; didn't you, Auntie?

MME. CHENEVAS. You're right; it seems as if some of

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us, at the threshold of womanhood, seek instinctively a refuge from the world—we have a presentiment that we are not going to be happy in it.

MADELEINE. You are sad to-day, Auntie.

MME. CHENEVAS. That's nothing new for me. I have no reason to be gay.

MADELEINE. What is it now? Is it that letter from your lawyer?

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes; he writes that I am completely ruined; my husband has entangled, or, rather, complicated, his affairs in such a manner that there is no hope of my getting possession of the little I have.

MADELEINE. It's abominable!

MME. CHENEVAS. So, not content with having deceived me and tortured me to the point of obliging me to sue for a divorce, he has ruined me. Morally and financially, I am his victim, and here I am, at thirty-five, alone in the world, without means, and rich only in sad memories.

MADELEINE. [*Going to kiss her aunt.*] You are not alone.—All of us love you.—You will find here affection and tenderness.—Mamma will never abandon her sister.—This is your own home.

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes, my dear girl, you have excellent hearts; but you cannot understand: however generous and warm the welcome may be, it is always hard *to be taken in,* instead of being merely a welcomed guest.

MADELEINE. It's not hopeless.—Freydières comes back to-day.—We shall see him, probably, very soon. You know how devoted he is to you; he will give you some good advice.

MME. CHENEVAS. He will advise me to be resigned, or else to bring a suit.

MADELEINE. And he will win it; he has so much ability, and your cause is so just!

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MME. CHENEVAS. You have some beautiful illusions. It isn't sufficient that a cause should be just to have it triumph.

MADELEINE. All the same, I have the greatest confidence in Freydières. Besides his being very eloquent, he has the reputation of having never pleaded a cause that was not honorable.

MME. CHENEVAS. To make the truth appear is to attempt a miracle.

MADELEINE. He will do it.

MME. CHENEVAS. I ask nothing better. [*A silence.*]

MADELEINE. Auntie, you married for love, didn't you?

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes, for love,—and you see where it has led me. Let it be a warning to you!

MME. JADAIN. Why do you say that to the child, Alice? It's no reason, because such a marriage hasn't succeeded with you.

MME. CHENEVAS. With me, as with a great many others.

MME. JADAIN. On that score, as much could be said for marriages of convenience.

MADELEINE. And you, Grandma—was yours a love match or a marriage of convenience?

MME. JADAIN. Oh, both!

MADELEINE. *Half-naf!*—Marriage is a serious thing.

MME. JADAIN. It's true.—The time for you to think of it will soon come.

MADELEINE. Oh, I have plenty of time.

MME. JADAIN. Why, not so very much. In two years you will be eighteen: ready to marry.

MADELEINE. But the question is not of marrying for the sake of being married; but to be able to choose——

MME. JADAIN. I'm not troubled about that; pretty as you are, and with the dowry you will have, you will be able to choose.

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MADELEINE. Oh, the dowry! Don't speak of that! And, besides, for a woman, the essential thing is not to be merely *pretty, pretty;* but to have the power to please—like Mamma, for instance. There is no question but that Mamma, besides being pretty, exercises a great fascination upon everybody.

MME. CHENEVAS. You resemble your mother very much, too.

MME. JADAIN. You think so, Alice? I don't; it should be rather on the side of her father: she is a Jadain.

MADELEINE. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, Grandma!—a Jadain, a Jadain! You said that as if you were speaking of a Montmorency. You want me to resemble your son, rather than your daughter-in-law; that's very natural. But, to come back to what I was saying—this power to please gives you the right to choose, and, with this power, and with determination, the man chosen ought to love you. First, I want to know the man I'm going to marry.

MME. JADAIN. What do you mean? Know him! Of course, you will know him.

MADELEINE. Yes; but I don't want to marry him on the strength of an introduction merely. A marriage of convenience—how horrible! I have my own ideas about that. And, besides, I want to marry somebody who *is* somebody.

MME. JADAIN. Oh, you're ambitious! It's not so easy as you think, and it's rather hard to find a very young man who "*is somebody,*" as you say.

MADELEINE. I don't care, either, for a very young man.

MME. JADAIN. Yes, I know, young girls to-day don't hesitate to marry older men.

MADELEINE. Older! You mustn't exaggerate, either. You gain a great deal, don't you, if you mate people according to age, and they are bored at being together?

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You needn't fear such a thing with a superior man, while a fool is always old.

MME. JADAIN. It seems to me you have very decided opinions.

MADELEINE. One ought to know what one wants.

MME. JADAIN. Perhaps you have some one already in mind?

MADELEINE. [*Blushing suddenly.*] Oh, dear, no!

MME. JADAIN. Your face has grown very red.

MADELEINE. Not at all; it's you who see red.

MME. JADAIN. [*Laughing.*] See, Alice,—look at her!

MADELEINE. The blood has rushed to my head; it's very warm here. And then, it's ridiculous; it's stupid. Of course, now that you've said that, it's *settled.* No, Grandma, please don't laugh like that.—I don't find it funny at all.

MME. JADAIN. Well, well! I'm not trying to find out your secrets.

MADELEINE. But I haven't any secrets. It's strange that a girl can't speak of marriage in a general way, without your immediately putting on a knowing air and making it personal. [*She gets up and goes towards the door.*]

MME. JADAIN. You're going away? You're angry?

MADELEINE. [*At the door.*] Oh, not the least in the world, Grandma! I'm going to my room, because there's no chance to talk seriously with you. I thought we were women together; I was mistaken—that's all.

MME. JADAIN. You are going to practice your "exercises in sadness"?

MADELEINE. Perhaps. [*She goes out.*]

MME. JADAIN. She appeared really provoked. I'm sure I hit right. Don't you find what she said applies remarkably to Monsieur Freydières?

MME. CHENEVAS. Oh, I don't know. No. Why?

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MME. JADAIN. You heard her: She doesn't care to marry a very young man, but some one who *is* somebody. Besides, Monsieur Freydières is the only man she sees at all intimately, for he is the only man who comes here often.

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes, he is working on my divorce; and so he comes here rather often since I'm making my home here.

MME. JADAIN. But he came here before; I have always seen him; it wouldn't be impossible that the chit had noticed him and lost her head over him.

MME. CHENEVAS. You think so?

MME. JADAIN. You haven't noticed anything?

MME. CHENEVAS. No.

MME. JADAIN. Of course; you are absorbed in your own affairs. But it's evident Madeleine thinks a great deal of this Monsieur Freydières; she likes to talk of him. He is distinguished, captivating, celebrated. How old do you suppose he is? Thirty-four—thirty-five?

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes.

MME. JADAIN. For a man, he's still young; such a match is not inconceivable.

MME. CHENEVAS. He has seen Madeleine as a little girl, and always thinks of her as a child.

MME. JADAIN. But she considers him as a man; there is, perhaps, where the danger lies,—especially if he doesn't think of marrying her. All this is between us, and I speak to you about it simply because you are here. I shall not even mention it to Claire, although we are on excellent terms. My daughter-in-law understands that I don't meddle with anything. After all, perhaps I am mistaken. All the same, she became as red as a peony. [*At this moment, a maid ushers* FREYDIÈRES *into the room.*]

FREYDIÈRES. [*After having shaken hands with* MME.

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CHENEVAS, *bows to* MME. JADAIN.] Good-morning, Madame.

MME. JADAIN. Good-morning, Monsieur.

FREYDIÈRES. You are well?

MME. JADAIN. As you see.

FREYDIÈRES. You are here for some time?

MME. JADAIN. We leave the early part of next week.

FREYDIÈRES. Is Monsieur Jadain well?

MME. JADAIN. Oh, yes, thank you; he has gone to the Folies-Bergère.

FREYDIÈRES. Oho!

MME. JADAIN. Upon the advice of his granddaughter.

FREYDIÈRES. Ha, ha!

[CLAIRE *comes in.*

CLAIRE. [*To* FREYDIÈRES.] Good-morning. You returned this morning?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes.

CLAIRE. You've seen your mother? How is she?

FREYDIÈRES. Very well; she doesn't change; she's truly extraordinary for her age.

CLAIRE. She was glad to see you?

FREYDIÈRES. Very glad—poor woman!

CLAIRE. I have received some beautiful flowers. Thank you!—You see, they have kept wonderfully.

MME. JADAIN. Will you excuse me if I leave you, Monsieur? I have some errands to do; besides, I'm not going to say good-by, for I shall see you again. [*She goes out.*]

CLAIRE. Has my sister told you that she has received a letter from her lawyer?

FREYDIÈRES. We've not yet had any time to talk. [*To* MME. CHENEVAS.] Have you this letter?

MME. CHENEVAS. Here it is.

[*He reads the letter that* MME. CHENEVAS *hands him.*

CLAIRE. What do you think of it?

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FREYDIÈRES. It's not very encouraging.

MME. CHENEVAS. Do you believe we shall get anything?

FREYDIÈRES. It will be difficult; your husband is not distrainable; he lives with his mother, and does business under an assumed name.

CLAIRE. Can't you demand a settlement?

FREYDIÈRES. Not before three years.

MME. CHENEVAS. What's to be done?

FREYDIÈRES. First, you ought to see your lawyer, since he wishes to talk with you. Tell him that I'll see him to-morrow, at the Palais.

MME. CHENEVAS. I'm going there now. [*She goes out.*]

CLAIRE. [*Seeing that* FREYDIÈRES *makes a movement towards her.*] No, no, don't come near me; don't tempt me here,—or I shall throw myself into your arms and kiss you, regardless——

FREYDIÈRES. My darling!

CLAIRE. O, my dear Jacques, all this long week without seeing you! Although it has been only eight days since you left, it seems months to me. Never has time dragged so dolefully. Oh, I'm so happy to see you again! I hope you had a miserable time. Did you think of me down there?

FREYDIÈRES. I passed a sad week myself,—especially a chilly New Year's.—What's that?

CLAIRE. Nothing. I thought I heard some one coming.

FREYDIÈRES. Your husband is at home?

CLAIRE. [*In a formal tone.*] Yes; the maid has told him you are here. You stayed alone with your mother?

FREYDIÈRES. Alone! For four days we had uncles, aunts, cousins, and the distant relatives who are always there at such times. I was obliged to look after all these people; I wasn't allowed even my dearest thoughts.—It was maddening!

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CLAIRE. Yes, when people are obliged to be separated, the only thing for them is solitude. It's cruel enough not to see each other, but it's worse still not to think of each other.

FREYDIÈRES. And how did you pass that dreadful day?

CLAIRE. Ah, my dear friend, my husband was in a bad humor; my sister wept; my mother-in-law was—my mother-in-law. I assure you it was not very lively.

FREYDIÈRES. There is good reason to say, "New Year's is heart-breaking when one has no family, hateful when one has."

CLAIRE. Listen!—Did some one ring?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I think so.

[*Voice in the hall.*

CLAIRE. [*Listening.*] It's some one for Etienne. One is not very quiet here.

FREYDIÈRES. You did not go away at all?

CLAIRE. No. That is to say, we went to watch out the old year at the Ernsteins'.

FREYDIÈRES. O, you did! Tell me, how did it pass? Did Mme. Ernstein carry out her plan of a vaudeville show?

CLAIRE. Why, yes. Mme. Lacorte waltzed with the young Listel, *reversing*—in more than one sense—all the time, as if they had done nothing else all their lives.

FREYDIÈRES. It must have been a pretty sight!

CLAIRE. Mme. des Trembles sang some jolly songs; Monsieur Loriot accompanied her at the piano.

FREYDIÈRES. And didn't Mme. Ernstein take part in the vaudeville?

CLAIRE. She sang and danced a Spanish dance with Monsieur de Meillan.

FREYDIÈRES. So there is still a *Spain*?

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CLAIRE. She had a costume which was extremely becoming—a very short skirt.

FREYDIÈRES. Of course. In this kind of show the shorter the better.

CLAIRE. Monsieur de Meillan was dressed like a toreador.

FREYDIÈRES. It must have been amusing to see all those silly women play the fool with their lovers.

CLAIRE. Amusing? No—just the opposite!

FREYDIÈRES. Ah, so it was not only the waltz that was *reversed* in that company! Why do you laugh?

CLAIRE. I laugh because there was one thing especially that was really funny. All the people who had taken part in the singing and dancing thought they looked so well in their costumes that they kept them on afterwards; among others little Mme. Plotter, who was dressed as a drummer-boy of the Republic, to sing children's roundelays.

FREYDIÈRES. No!

CLAIRE. It's the strict truth!

FREYDIÈRES. But she's a woman of sixty.

CLAIRE. Yes, and this costume was so little in keeping with her age that it seemed a mockery to compliment her. So the whole evening people acted as if they didn't notice it. She certainly reached the limit of the ridiculous.

FREYDIÈRES. Did any one make love to you?

CLAIRE. Oh, no! When a woman loves a man as I love you, she is safe: there is a certain atmosphere about her which protects her from all attempts; as within her, a certain force which protects her against all temptations. People feel it.

FREYDIÈRES. However, Ernstein is always very attentive to you?

CLAIRE. Yes, when you are not there. What of that?

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He commenced and he continues without hope; it's a delicate homage he pays me.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh! Without hope! Ernstein is one of those men who have some sweeping theories about women; he is always waiting for his chance.

CLAIRE. He may wait as long as he cares to. You are not jealous?

FREYDIÈRES. No, and it's not necessary, either, for you to wish it.

[*During these last words* ETIENNE *has entered.*

ETIENNE. Ah, here is my good Freydières. How are you, my dear friend? I hope you've taken a vacation.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, barely a week.

ETIENNE. Still, you're lucky to be able to go away even for a week. I can't do it. When I think that in the four years since we came to Paris I haven't found a moment to go back to my old home in Dauphiné!

FREYDIÈRES. You're always very busy.

ETIENNE. Don't speak of that! Ernstein leaves me everything to do. He does nothing—he's never there. He starts this evening for San Remo. Oh, he'll not kill himself. By the way, Claire, you don't know what I've just heard?

CLAIRE. No.

ETIENNE. Delanglu has been here.

CLAIRE. Delanglu?

ETIENNE. Yes, an old schoolmate. He told me, and he has it on good authority, that Ernstein is to be nominated an *officer.*

CLAIRE. What! an officer?

ETIENNE. Yes, an officer of the Legion of Honor. Not in the *territorial,* you may be sure! It's done and the nomination will appear in a few days in the *State Records.*

CLAIRE. Well, what of it?

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ETIENNE. What of it! It's shocking—it's—disgusting —it's abominable!

CLAIRE. Oh, abominable!

ETIENNE. Oh, you're just like all the rest.—Good heavens! You find it perfectly natural that Ernstein should be nominated "officer," while your husband is nothing, nothing at all. You think it's all right that I should work and wear myself out as I do and that he should be decorated.

CLAIRE. What does it matter to you?

ETIENNE. It exasperates me, shocks me—the injustice shocks me. It's not because I care for a miserable bit of ribbon. Oh, great gods, I am above that!

CLAIRE. Well, what then?

ETIENNE. Simply, in all this, I don't think Ernstein is acting on the square towards me. I had to learn of his nomination from Delanglu!

FREYDIÈRES. He probably wanted to surprise you.

ETIENNE. Most of all, I think he lacks decency. Yes, he ought to have the loyalty, the decency, to say to the influential persons that he knows, "I have a conscientious partner, a devoted friend, who makes all the sketches for these works for which you load me with honors; because I, Ernstein, am totally incapable and have remained what I was at the 'Tech.,' that is, a dunce, a veritable dunce." Come, isn't that true?

FREYDIÈRES. Remember, my dear friend, that it is very difficult for Ernstein to pass such judgment upon himself. All the same, we must not exaggerate. Ernstein is not without merit—he's a first-class administrator.

ETIENNE. With the supreme merit of having money.

FREYDIÈRES. Well, that is an advantage for you, for he saves you all financial anxiety; and for students like you, peace of mind is most essential.

ETIENNE. And obscurity. [*He walks back and forth*

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with long strides. CLAIRE *and* FREYDIÈRES *exchange looks of weariness.*] As for this dome, the famous dome of the Exposition—it is I who have made all the calculations. I have gone over them more than ten times to make sure I have made no mistake. Just think of that responsibility! I have worked all night many a time—I didn't eat—I didn't sleep—all for what? That it should be known everywhere simply as the Ernstein Dome. Ernstein Dome, that's fine! It's a comedy! Ah! fame and popularity will come easily to *him.* Well, I shall be an obscure associate all my life.

CLAIRE. Haven't you yourself some associates more humble than you? You shouldn't always look merely at those above you; and if you complain at having worked all night several times, what words of pity will you find for those unfortunate workmen who were killed last week when a staging fell down?

ETIENNE. What has that to do with the case? Nothing at all; it is not only people who fall from stagings that are killed. I have troubles enough to kill me one of these days. Bah! I'm simply a stalking-horse.

CLAIRE. In what way? Ernstein has kept his promises. He made a position for you; he gives you a share in the profits; that's all he promised. These *troubles* you speak of you make yourself, and you are irritated simply because your self-conceit is wounded.

ETIENNE. Self-conceit—that's just it, of course! Ah, you decide it easily. But women don't understand anything of such matters—the women, good heavens!—the women—provided the husband works, makes money, as they say in America—the rest is of no account. That's what the husband is for. All the same, I was happier when I was at Grenoble.

CLAIRE. But down there your irritation was just as

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bad; everywhere you saw injustice, unfairness; you took offense at everything; you were continually repeating that life, under such conditions, was no longer bearable—just exactly what you say now, and what I foresaw you would say.

ETIENNE. Oh, it's understood that I am insufferable; I can't stay anywhere nor get on with anybody; that's what you want to say, I suppose? But since you knew me so well, you should have kept me from accepting Ernstein's proposals.

CLAIRE. You accepted them contrary to my advice, and your decision was irrevocable. Don't shift the responsibility, then. Besides, this is not the first discussion we have had on this subject—and it won't be the last, unfortunately!

ETIENNE. Oh, yes—everything's all right; *you* are satisfied—that's the principal thing. [*He takes out his watch.*] Half-past three; I must go.

CLAIRE. Where are you going?

ETIENNE. I'm going to the factory to see how the work is getting on—while Ernstein is preparing to go to the Riviera to rest from *my* toils. It's beastly weather, too.

CLAIRE. Can't you put it off until to-morrow?

ETIENNE. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] To-morrow! I have an engagement with the architect to-day. An engagement with an architect is not put off so easily as that. That's of no interest to you, of course. It's raining; by Jove, how it rains!—but that doesn't make any difference; I shall flounder in the mud, that's all. What do I risk? A cold; at the worst, bronchitis, inflammation of the lungs. That's not to be compared, evidently, with those unfortunate workmen who were killed in falling from a staging. Oh, no! Well, good-by, Freydières. By the way, I need

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to talk with you about that patent—I should like very much to avoid a lawsuit.

FREYDIÈRES. I am at your disposal.

ETIENNE. I'll come to see you to-morrow. What day is it to-morrow? Friday? Then, perhaps I can't. Well, then, come to dine with us; that's much easier. We'll talk after dinner. Arrange it with Claire. [*He goes out.*]

CLAIRE. You've heard him. You see, I'm not exaggerating when I tell you how disagreeable he is becoming.

FREYDIÈRES. He'll never forget that he led his class; so he'll never be able to stand having any one ahead of him. Poor man, he is to be pitied!

CLAIRE. No doubt; but the rest of us, who have to stand him, are also to be pitied. Ah! I assure you, life isn't very amusing these days.

FREYDIÈRES. But you ought to be used to it by this time.

CLAIRE. I ought; but it is always painful for me—every time I see him so discontented and unjust. He can't endure Ernstein any more.

FREYDIÈRES. He's his partner—he has only to observe the rules of partnership.

CLAIRE. Well, let's not talk any more about him. You are here! You are here—that's the chief thing. Ah, you see, I have so much need to feel that I am loved.

FREYDIÈRES. I love you, my darling; and I love you more when I see you unhappy.

CLAIRE. Is that true? Then I'd like to be so always.

FREYDIÈRES. No, that's not necessary.

CLAIRE. Remember, I have been a whole week alone. You mustn't be gone so long again. When you're away my poor heart is cold.

FREYDIÈRES. My poor darling! Yes, we need to be together. Listen, now! I'm going to say good-by to you.

CLAIRE. So soon!

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FREYDIÈRES. Wait. I'm going back home—to our home—where everything is ready to receive you, and you will come to join me very soon. Will you come?

CLAIRE. Oh! I can't.

FREYDIÈRES. Why?

CLAIRE. I must call on Mme. Ernstein.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh! Can't you go there another time?

CLAIRE. Why, no; it's her first Thursday—her first Thursday.

FREYDIÈRES. The devil take Mme. Ernstein and her Thursday; really, she should have chosen another day.

CLAIRE. She didn't know.

FREYDIÈRES. Then, make your call at once and come afterwards.

CLAIRE. Afterwards I shall be with Madeleine.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh! that's it; Madeleine now. Can't you get rid of her?

CLAIRE. Oh, get *rid* of her! I don't like that word, when it's used about my daughter.

FREYDIÈRES. Most certainly! When it concerns your daughter, it is necessary to weigh one's words. Ah! I shall finish by hating the child, if she is always to come between us.

CLAIRE. Oh! don't say that.

FREYDIÈRES. Why, yes, I will say it. Look here—put yourself in my place: I come here, happy to see you again, and everything conspires against my joy; first, it is the bad humor of your husband; then it is Mme. Ernstein's Thursday; then Madeleine! Don't you understand that I should like to feel that you belong to me a little more? For a whole week I have lived in hope and expectation, and now you refuse me.

CLAIRE. I don't refuse you. I have explained to you why it is impossible. I'll come to-morrow.

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FREYDIÈRES. To-morrow it will be something else. Madeleine will probably have a drawing lesson or music lesson and you will have to go with her.

CLAIRE. That's not it—but she's no longer a child; she will soon be a young lady. You've not yet realized that?

FREYDIÈRES. What then?

CLAIRE. Then you ought to understand the precautions I must take with her.

FREYDIÈRES. What precautions?

CLAIRE. Only think—if she should ever suspect! An accident, any imprudence on my part, would be sufficient to change this unsuspecting child into a clear-sighted judge. I am obliged to take her to-day, but don't conclude from that that she is always between us.

FREYDIÈRES. [*With raised voice.*] She certainly is always between us.

CLAIRE. Don't speak so loud.

FREYDIÈRES. She certainly is!—Remember, when you came to Paris, when we met again, it was on her account that you struggled so long against me, against yourself, and against your love. And in those first days, when I begged you to go away with me, so that we might love each other freely, it was still on her account that you remained.

CLAIRE. I could not give her up, nor set her such an example. Most certainly I was not afraid of the scandal for myself.

FREYDIÈRES. It would have been only an apparent scandal, and of short duration, at that. At any rate, it would have been preferable to a constant deception, to this respectable immorality we have accepted and from which we are continually suffering.

CLAIRE. Yes, I sometimes think so, especially when I see you like this, reproaching me for the least opposition,

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and for the sacrifice I have made to remain with my daughter. It is not generous on your part, for you ought to know perfectly well that I, too, feel the bitterness of it deeply.

FREYDIÈRES. I'm not reproaching you for anything; only to-day you make me foresee that our situation, already so complicated, is going to become still more so because your daughter is growing up—that there is going to be in our love still more annoyance, constraint, deceit, lies, comedy—for it is that at bottom; there is quite enough as it is! In that case, then, it would be better for us to have two existences—frankly, separate.

CLAIRE. Separate?—What do you mean?

FREYDIÈRES. I'll not come here any more—I'll see you at my home, when you can come. In this way I shall escape so many things that hurt me, vex me, and make me unjust. I know, if we have only rare moments to spend together, I shall not grieve you with these recriminations which are the result of our irritating position.

CLAIRE. Can two beings, who love each other, be content with those hours alone, however intimate they may be? Remember, we tried it in the beginning, but we weren't able to keep it up. In the first place, what excuse would you make for not coming here any more?

FREYDIÈRES. I found one very well for coming.

CLAIRE. That was easier! Circumstances have been favorable to your becoming the intimate friend of the house. Let us profit by it.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, we do profit by it. On this side we have nothing to complain of. Every evening, if I like, my place at table is kept for me between you and your sister and opposite your husband and daughter.

CLAIRE. After all, we are no exceptions.

FREYDIÈRES. We ought to be.

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CLAIRE. We ought, both of us, to have begun sooner and to have remained firm in our duty. This atmosphere of constraint and of lies weighs upon me as much as upon you; but we breathe it together, and when I can't be wholly yours, as to-day, I have at least the consolation of seeing you, of speaking to you, of hearing you. You know I need to have you a part of my life, to belong to it. I have arranged everything for that. I am too much accustomed to it—and you want it, all of a sudden——

FREYDIÈRES. It can be done gradually.

CLAIRE. [*In tears.*] Then it's the end of everything. It would be better to end it all, at once, if that is what you want, rather than to separate our lives, as you propose. But I don't want to. First, I couldn't—it is more than I could endure. At the mere thought of it, as you see, it seems as if I were falling into a deep, dark abyss—it seems as if I—I—I don't know—I don't care—it's all alike to me.

FREYDIÈRES. Claire, Claire, don't weep!—I beg of you—don't weep like that! What if your daughter should come? I'm very sorry; I didn't think—you haven't understood me at all.

CLAIRE. I understood that you said some perfectly dreadful things to me.

FREYDIÈRES. Not *dreadful,* but sensible.

CLAIRE. Oh!

FREYDIÈRES. You began it;—I only followed you;—you told me——

CLAIRE. I—I told you something sensible?

FREYDIÈRES. Why, yes, you said that Madeleine might notice——

CLAIRE. But she won't notice anything at all.

FREYDIÈRES. All right, then.

CLAIRE. It's true. I don't know why I told you that.

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We are not placarding ourselves, thank heavens! Then she worships me blindly; she is innocence itself; she doesn't know other girls who are sophisticated; she has always stayed with me, and always seen you in this house. How do you expect such a thought to enter her head?

FREYDIÈRES. Very true.

CLAIRE. You laugh?

FREYDIÈRES. I smile and you cry;—I'm doubly disarmed.

CLAIRE. You think I'm inconsistent.

FREYDIÈRES. No more than I.

CLAIRE. You shouldn't expect me to be heroic—you mustn't torment me. And especially, don't take it out on Madeleine—don't detest her—love her. If you only knew what a delightful companion she is for me and how painful the house would often be without her, who is its brightness and joy! She is like a gay little lily blooming beside me, and when you are away, as in these last days, she keeps me from finding it so dreary. She is the only one, too, who knows how to talk to me about you.

FREYDIÈRES. Indeed! Poor child!

CLAIRE. I have already had enough remorse in dividing my affection between you and her, for she loves me alone. There she is better than I.

FREYDIÈRES. It's not the same thing; a woman can be both a lover and a mother. You're proof of that. She, also, later, will divide her affection between you and the man she will choose—if she divides it—for she is capable of giving her body and soul to this stranger. Then you wouldn't count.

CLAIRE. Oh, stop, stop! Perhaps it's the truth—and it is for her especially that I have sacrificed the most beautiful thing in the world—freedom in love.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, freedom in love. Ah, Claire, do you

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sometimes think of the happiness denied us? Only this morning I was thinking of it in the train which was bringing me to you. Think how we shall never travel together, we two, alone; that no train will ever bear us towards those azure shores where lie the fair cities of our dreams, the pleasant lands of our imagination; that we shall die without ever having gazed upon them together! Nor can we ever live alone together, under the same roof, in a peaceful home, and enjoy the charming intimacy of long talks among familiar things; we shall never know the happiness of long hours without fear of interruption. Oh, my darling, these thoughts are bitter. Here lies all the sadness of such a union as ours.—Well, the bright sunshine is not for us; we are condemned to be only two poor little shadows, in a perpetual twilight, as at this moment.

CLAIRE. We are not always shadows; think of the moments when I'm a woman in your arms! We have no freedom in our love, that is true; but, to pay for it, I love you all the more.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, and I love you—I adore you. You know very well I'll do what you want. I beg your pardon for having given you pain, and I kiss these dear eyes of yours that have shed tears.

CLAIRE. Ah, my poor eyes, how many tears they have shed on your account! You were very naughty just now—so naughty even——

FREYDIÈRES. That you will come to-morrow.

CLAIRE. Yes! [*They hold each other in a long and close embrace.*] Some one is coming. Be careful!

MADELEINE. [*Entering.*] Oh, how dark it is here!

CLAIRE. Yes. Night comes quickly. [*She turns on the electric light.*]

MADELEINE. Good-evening, Monsieur Freydières.

FREYDIÈRES. Good-evening, Madeleine.

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MADELEINE. Mamma, do you know it is five o'clock? Oughtn't we to go to Madame Ernstein's?

CLAIRE. I am going now to get ready.

FREYDIÈRES. Good-by, Madame; I am going to leave you to make your call.

MADELEINE. You're going away just when I come? Don't you know that isn't very polite? You might stay a little while with me.

CLAIRE. Why, yes; stay with Madeleine. We'll go together. I shan't be long. I'll be back in a minute. [*She goes out.*]

MADELEINE. You ought to go with us to the Ernsteins'.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, no—I have to go home—I must work.

MADELEINE. Did you have a fine trip?

FREYDIÈRES. Very fine.

MADELEINE. Is your mother well?

FREYDIÈRES. As well as possible.

MADELEINE. Thank you for the chocolates you sent me in that lovely box—it was almost too fine. Come here and let me scold you a little. No, seriously, you have spoiled me.

FREYDIÈRES. You have already thanked me in the nice little letter you wrote.

MADELEINE. Yes, I think it was nice. I'm awfully glad to see you again; you've been gone only a week and yet it seems much longer. It's astonishing what an empty place your absence made here. I'm so used to seeing you and talking to you. Well, I miss you—and then, you are my friend—aren't you?

FREYDIÈRES. Why, of course. And did you receive many presents?

MADELEINE. Enough to be satisfied. First, mamma gave me a very pretty ring. See!

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, it's very pretty.

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MADELEINE. Oh, Mamma has *lots of taste*. Papa gave me a very beautiful album with my monogram on it and a gold lock and key so that I can lock it.

FREYDIÈRES. Lock it?

MADELEINE. Yes, it's to write my diary.

FREYDIÈRES. Your diary? Marie Bashkirtseff.

MADELEINE. Don't know her.

FREYDIÈRES. And what are you going to write in it, if I may ask?

MADELEINE. Oh, I don't know—my thoughts, my impressions——

FREYDIÈRES. You have impressions?

MADELEINE. I don't know—I think—perhaps you think I grow like a pumpkin.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, ho! A pumpkin—what a thing to say!

MADELEINE. You are insulting.

FREYDIÈRES. So you decided that from the very first day of January of this year you would think, you would feel?

MADELEINE. From the first day of January exactly, as you said—and you couldn't have said it better. Yes, I have some new sensations—some serious thoughts, solemn, even. I don't look upon life as I did before.

FREYDIÈRES. [*Smiling.*] You are progressing.

MADELEINE. Yes. You needn't smile—I know you always think of me as a child.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, what an idea! I shouldn't dare. What made you think that?

MADELEINE. It's so; you always treat me like a "backfisch."

FREYDIÈRES. Ha, ha! A "backfisch!"—Where did you get that word?

MADELEINE. It's a German word that means a fried fish—and in Germany they call girls that when they are at

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the disagreeable age, or, if you like it better, at the silly age;—you know—short skirts and pigtails down the back. I'm past that. I can understand serious things.

FREYDIÈRES. I don't doubt it. And what else have they given you?

MADELEINE. Grandma gave me a bronze, for my room—an *artistic bronze,* since it represents a Cupid blowing soap bubbles. I've put it on my bureau; but when Grandma goes away I shall stuff it into a cupboard. I never saw anything so ugly.

FREYDIÈRES. Is it so ugly as all that?

MADELEINE. Would you like it? I'll give it to you.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, no.

MADELEINE. There, you see! a soap bubble in bronze—not very light, is it? It looks like a cannon ball.

FREYDIÈRES. Don't get excited; calm yourself!

MADELEINE. Yes, I'll stuff it into a cupboard and I'll take it out only when Grandma comes again. You understand?

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, perfectly.

MADELEINE. [*Imitating him.*] Oh, perfectly!

[*She bursts out laughing.* CLAIRE *enters.*

CLAIRE. Why! How gay you are! That's right, don't stop; you'll not laugh any younger.

MADELEINE. Perhaps I shall not laugh when I'm older.

CLAIRE. Well, let us go.

MADELEINE. *Andiamo!*

[CLAIRE *goes out first, then* MADELEINE, *followed by* FREYDIÈRES, *who closes the door. The curtain falls.*]

ACT III.

[*Eighteen months later, at the* ERNSTEINS'. *The little drawing-room is small but elegant. A French win-*

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dow at the left opens into the garden; at the rear is a staircase, giving on to a gallery leading to the ball-room. A door is at the right.

When the curtain rises, two young men, LUYNAIS *and* CLÉMENTIER, *are talking near the recess of the French window which leads into the garden; a third young man,* PRABERT, *comes to join them.*]

PRABERT. What are you doing there?

LUYNAIS. You see, we're taking the air between two airs.

CLÉMENTIER. By George, aren't they through with that concert yet!

PRABERT. Listen! What do you think?

[*The voice of a woman is heard singing:*]

"Amour, viens aider ma faiblesse
Verse le poison dans son sein!"

LUYNAIS. Who's singing?

PRABERT. Why, it's Mme. Ernstein.

CLÉMENTIER. No one has a better right; she's in her own house!

[*The voice of a man is now heard singing:*]

"J'ai gravi la montagne
Pour venir jusqu' à toi.
Dagon qui m' accompagne
M'a guidé vers ton toit!"

LUYNAIS. Ah! it's Mme. Ernstein. Listen! What a heavy voice she has this evening!

PRABERT. The "heavy voice" is not hers; it is the Grand-Priest's!

CLÉMENTIER. What Grand-Priest?

PRABERT. Where do you come from? You haven't looked at the program? They are giving the second act of *Samson and Dalila* in costume—magnificent scenery.

CLÉMENTIER. Aha!

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LUYNAIS. Madame Ernstein must be very beautiful as Dalila.

PRABERT. Very beautiful—she has a *fitting* gown.

LUYNAIS. Yes, it fits her like a glove.

PRABERT. You're a beast.

CLÉMENTIER. And Samson?

PRABERT. Is Monsieur Fontenay.

CLÉMENTIER. Bravo! Bravo!

LUYNAIS. Think! what a wonderful performance is being given here at the Ernsteins' to-night! To-morrow the favored ones will be able to say with pride, "When we were at the *Ernsteins'*." Superb!

CLÉMENTIER. What lucky dogs we are!

PRABERT. You're at the Ernsteins', to be sure, but rather far from the show. Go nearer; have the appearance, at least, of being interested in what is going on; you're not very polite to stay out here.

CLÉMENTIER. My good fellow, we shall not budge from here.

LUYNAIS. If Madame Ernstein sings, that's her business; in a *soirée* like this each one has his own "*stunt*"; ours is to stay here by the window.

CLÉMENTIER. Adonis and Narcissus! [*They take the pose.*]

PRABERT. Well! *I'm* going into the ballroom.

LUYNAIS. [*With emphasis.*] Where you should have stayed.

PRABERT. And where there are bewitching young girls.

LUYNAIS. Oh! I know your young girls; they are always the same.

PRABERT. There is a new one—an adorable little thing, delightful, charming, a blonde with blue eyes, a little nose no bigger than a hazel-nut, lips red like two cherries—waist of a wasp, a bust——

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CLÉMENTIER. Of a wasp. Don't get stung!

PRABERT. The bust of a young goddess—and hips——

LUYNAIS. Of a wasp. Go on!

PRABERT. How witty you think you are! hips which promise——

LUYNAIS. And may never fulfil——

PRABERT. And the back of her neck and shoulders—how I dote on a beautiful back!

LUYNAIS. Well, you're rewarded often enough with a *back* view!

CLÉMENTIER. And who is this marvel about whom you rave like the young Montague when he saw Miss Capulet for the first time?

PRABERT. Mademoiselle Jadain.

LUYNAIS. The daughter of Jadain, Ernstein's partner?

PRABERT. Yes.

CLÉMENTIER. I don't know her; but from principle I prefer her mother. Every time I have been introduced to a girl I have fallen hopelessly in love with the mother—that's a mania with me. I would give all the girls here, including her own daughter, for Madame Jadain! Ah! what a charming lover she would be! Don't you think so?

LUYNAIS. Ask Freydières.

CLÉMENTIER. She has always been very much in love with him.

PRABERT. It has lasted now for more than five years, and it's not likely to stop. But you should see her daughter; she's a peach!

CLÉMENTIER. Prabert has great success with the girls.

LUYNAIS. He's a fine-looking chap and has stunning waistcoats—they're excellent to start a conversation. He has plenty of cheek, too. Under the frock coat of a gen-

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tleman he's a regular rowdy; he reminds me of a certain favorite of a queen of England who concealed a mean soul under a charming exterior.

PRABERT. Say, now——

LUYNAIS. That doesn't rob you of any of your other qualities—chiefly because you haven't any; now you're losing your head over this Mademoiselle Jadain; you'll get introduced to her, dance with her, and tell her all sorts of nasty things—that's the result of reading *risqué* novels. What pleasure can you find in all that?

PRABERT. Of feeling close to me a fragile, delicate being.

LUYNAIS. What good will that do you? You're disgusting. You'll never have the virtue of being original; you'll always remain a Lovelace.

PRABERT. How do you know? Perhaps I shall marry one of these girls some day?

LUYNAIS. Yes—you are quite capable of just that thing—marrying a girl introduced to you some evening at a ball. How commonplace! Ah!

CLÉMENTIER. The music is over. Hear the applause!

[*The noise of clapping is heard. Some people come out into the little drawing-room with exclamations of admiration. Noise and confusion. There are* CLAIRE JADAIN, MADELEINE, MME. LACORTE, FREYDIÈRES, DE MEILLAN, JADAIN, HEYBENS, *and others, who surround* MME. ERNSTEIN (*Dalila*), FONTENAY (*Samson*), *and the* HIGH-PRIEST.]

Such phrases as the following are heard:

It's excellent! Superb!—What a delicious, warm voice!

MME. ERNSTEIN. Oh, it's a pleasure to sing with him. [*She points to Samson.*]

MME. LACORTE. What a beautiful couple! What a charming duet! It's a joy to listen to you.

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[*Meanwhile,* LUYNAIS *and* CLÉMENTIER *have drawn near.*]

LUYNAIS. [*To* MME. ERNSTEIN.] Ah, Madame, I'm not paying you any compliments.

CLÉMENTIER. You gave me the shivers.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Really?

LUYNAIS. Merely listening to you, we became pale.

CLÉMENTIER. He's not exaggerating—how can we thank you for the pleasure you have given us?

MME. ERNSTEIN. It's very easy—in looking after the young ladies, taking them out for refreshments, while the windows in the ballroom are opened to let in a little fresh air;—it was so hot there! There must be some young ladies literally dying of thirst.

LUYNAIS. And they need a supporting arm upon which to lean as they follow the slippery path to champagne.

MME. ERNSTEIN. You understood?

LUYNAIS. They haven't any brothers?

CLÉMENTIER. No relatives?

LUYNAIS. No friends?

MME. ERNSTEIN. Go on, go on!

PRABERT. [*To* MME. ERNSTEIN.] Madame, will you introduce me to Mlle. Jadain?

MME. ERNSTEIN. What did I tell you? Isn't she pretty?

PRABERT. Charming!

MME. ERNSTEIN. And she's only just eighteen. She's coming out this evening; it's her first ball. Promise me to be very proper.

PRABERT. But I'm not accustomed——

MME. ERNSTEIN. Oh! I *know* you;—you have a reputation.

PRABERT. I'm better than my reputation, I assure you. There's going to be dancing, isn't there?

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MME. ERNSTEIN. Oh, it's rather late. We're going to have just a little waltz before the cotillon.

[*She takes* PRABERT *up to* MADELEINE, *who is in a little group with her mother, her father, and* FREYDIÈRES.]

MME. ERNSTEIN. Madeleine, let me introduce Monsieur Prabert to you.

PRABERT. [*Bowing.*] Mademoiselle, will you do me the honor of giving me the first dance?

MADELEINE. Yes, if you like.

PRABERT. Are you not thirsty?

MADELEINE. Yes, thank you; I am very thirsty——

PRABERT. May I take you to the refreshment room?

MADELEINE. [*To her mother.*] Mamma, I shall find you here?

CLAIRE. Yes, dear; you'll find me here in this room.

[MADELEINE *goes out on the arm of* PRABERT; MME. ERNSTEIN *goes to another group.* FONTENAY *talks with the* HIGH-PRIEST, DE MEILLAN *with a very pretty woman,* MME. LACORTE. ERNSTEIN *goes up to a young man with a black beard, who is all alone and does not seem to be enjoying himself.*]

ERNSTEIN. You are here all alone, Heybens?

HEYBENS. Why, yes.

ERNSTEIN. You are not having a very good time, are you?

HEYBENS. I'm not bored at all. How well Mme. Ernstein sang! I didn't know that she had such a beautiful voice.

ERNSTEIN. You didn't know? Oh, to be sure, you're no longer in Paris.

HEYBENS. Yes, I left eight years ago and returned only the day before yesterday.

ERNSTEIN. That's true. Well, yes, my wife is passionately fond of music and she sings fairly well.

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HEYBENS. She sings like a real artist. That must be gratifying to you.

ERNSTEIN. Gratifying—yes. There are scales—exercises, you know. Such a result isn't reached without practising a great deal. And this means effort and money.

HEYBENS. Tell me—it seems I know this house. Didn't it belong to Juliette d'Herblay?

ERNSTEIN. The very same. When we were married, she had married a Roumanian, who took her to his own country; so I bought her house.

HEYBENS. Well, yes. I should think I do know it. I had a great time here. One evening, I remember, we had a good dinner, with plenty of wine. An Englishman, gloriously drunk, bet that he could dance holding the barrel of a loaded revolver in his mouth. He fell—just here—near this door. The revolver went off and the man did not get up.

ERNSTEIN. Yes, yes, I know;—people have had great times here. Won't you take some refreshments?

HEYBENS. No, thank you; I'm going. I feel like a stranger—you understand. After several years of absence, it's astonishing how everything has changed at Paris. I don't know any one now.

ERNSTEIN. Ah, stay! I'm going to introduce you to my niece;—she is that very pretty woman you see there, who has the appearance of a portrait by Van Loo. [*He points out* MME. LACORTE.]

HEYBENS. That's true.

ERNSTEIN. Ha, ha! You don't want to leave now. But you knew her when she was a girl. Floumoune, they used to call her.

HEYBENS. Oh! it's Floumoune. I shouldn't have recognized her.

ERNSTEIN. She's married; her name is Mme. Lacorte.

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Come, I'm going to present you to her, or, rather, represent you. She's a first-class gossip; she'll bring you up to date pretty quickly. [*He leads* HEYBENS *up to* MME. LACORTE.]

ERNSTEIN. Pauline!

MME. LACORTE. Yes, uncle?

ERNSTEIN. Permit me to present to you Monsieur Heybens, one of my good friends whom you already know; he's one of our most remarkable prospectors. I sent him to Annam to study the land and he has discovered some gold mines which will make people open their eyes.

MME. LACORTE. I recognize Monsieur Heybens easily. You have let your beard grow, haven't you?

HEYBENS. What a memory you have, Madame!

MME. LACORTE. Haven't I? And you are tanned.

HEYBENS. The sun.

MME. LACORTE. I was going to say—it's very becoming to you.

ERNSTEIN. Just think! he wanted to go away.

MME. LACORTE. What a shame!

ERNSTEIN. Because he didn't know any one.

MME. LACORTE. How foolish!

ERNSTEIN. So I have brought him to you to be posted.

MME. LACORTE. You did well.

ERNSTEIN. It will be a good deed done.

MME. LACORTE. I shall do my best, uncle.

[ERNSTEIN *leaves them. They converse.*

ETIENNE. [*Very animated.*] You can't guess what I've just heard. Ernstein is going to be elected president of the Builders' Association—that man who has never built anything!

CLAIRE. Don't speak so loud. Don't get angry here; it's neither the place nor the time. Keep it till you get home.

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But honors will come to you, also. Be a little patient. You know very well they are keeping you in mind.

ETIENNE. I swear to you that if I am not decorated the next fourteenth of July I'll leave Ernstein.

FREYDIÈRES. Where will you go?

ETIENNE. Oh, I'm not worried about that. I've had fine offers—only in France we are so timid. One mustn't hesitate to leave a place and, if necessary, the country.—Why not?

CLAIRE. I didn't say anything, my dear.

ETIENNE. [*With force.*] Well, we'll go to Beauvais—we'll go to Beauvais, I say. Proposals have been made to me to buy the Debelker concern, which will become the firm of Jadain—and if I'm to slave for any one, it will *not* be for Ernstein, but for myself. [*He continues to talk excitedly while* CLAIRE *leads him away to calm him.*]

HEYBENS. You are well posted.

MME. LACORTE. Of course.

HEYBENS. Go on. It is very interesting. What about Madame Ernstein?

MME. LACORTE. Well, the young man with whom I was talking when my uncle interrupted us is M. de Meillan, the predecessor of Fontenay—the one who sang the part of Samson this evening with my aunt and who is the tenor she loves for the present. Of course, De Meillan thinks Fontenay does not know how to sing, that he has a falsetto voice, and that it is the abomination of desolation. As to the High-Priest, he's a young man who is also in love with my aunt and has taken up singing to make an excuse for seeing her. He hasn't any talent and makes himself ridiculous. Besides, he has no chance; he is a bass and the basses never get loved—no more in life than in the opera. The key of *F* doesn't open the heart of women in general and of my aunt in particular.

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ERNSTEIN. [*Coming up.*] Well, how are you getting along? You are posting Heybens?

MME. LACORTE. [*Modestly.*] Yes, uncle, I'm doing my best.

ERNSTEIN. Oh! I'm easy on that point. [*He taps* HEYBENS *familiarly on the shoulder.*] I told you right; you're in good hands. [*He goes away.*]

MME. LACORTE. Ha! ha! it's always amusing.

[*At this moment the only people in the little drawing-room are* MME. LACORTE *and* HEYBENS, *and at the other end, near the French-window,* FREYDIÈRES *and* CLAIRE.]

HEYBENS. You're naughty.

MME. LACORTE. Quite the contrary, I'm very nice. Are you getting tired of me?

HEYBENS. Not a bit; you do me the dis-honors of the house so well. Tell me, is that Freydières, the lawyer, over there near the window?

MME. LACORTE. Yes, it's he.

HEYBENS. With whom is he talking?

MME. LACORTE. [*Laughing.*] Ha! ha!

HEYBENS. Why do you laugh?

MME. LACORTE. Of course you couldn't know. It is Madame Jadain, the wife of Ernstein's partner. I'm going to tell you about them. Oh, it's a perfect romance; but let's not stay here, especially as we must be bothering them. Just think! they were childhood friends and it seems, ever since they've reached the age of reason, they've been madly in love. The Jadains have come to Paris and naturally . . .

[*She leads him away, talking all the time. Now the room is empty, except for* CLAIRE *and* FREYDIÈRES.]

CLAIRE. We are alone.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, alone. [*Ironically.*]

CLAIRE. Everybody is having refreshments. Now, dear,

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you can tell me whether my gown is pretty and if you like me in it.

FREYDIÈRES. Careful, careful!

CLAIRE. How prudent you are!

FREYDIÈRES. And how *im*prudent you are.

CLAIRE. I have a chance to talk to you and I'm going to take advantage of it. I don't see you any more.—For the longest time you haven't come to lunch or dinner.

FREYDIÈRES. You know why—I have been working.

CLAIRE. No one respects your work more than I;—but you've been going out to dinner.

FREYDIÈRES. There are some engagements I can't avoid.—You understand that in my position——

CLAIRE. Yes, I know—I'm wrong—I encroach on your life and I seem to want to control your words and deeds. That provokes you. I'm a bungler, am I not?

FREYDIÈRES. Why, no.

CLAIRE. Oh, I obey the common rule that when a woman feels she's being loved less she makes herself still less lovable.

FREYDIÈRES. You're very hard on yourself, and you're alarmed without reason.

CLAIRE. It's your fault—you appear strange this evening. You're not as you usually are.

FREYDIÈRES. Why, yes, I am.

CLAIRE. No, I'm sure of it. You are not angry with me, are you? Have I done anything?

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, Claire! Angry, why?

CLAIRE. I don't know. Sometimes only a little thing is needed. I'm trying to find out. You don't think I'm too décolletée? I know you don't like that.

FREYDIÈRES. Why, no—it seems to me you are décolletée, just like the rest of the women.

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CLAIRE. Just like the rest of the women! Oh, it's dreadful!

FREYDIÈRES. Dreadful, why?

CLAIRE. If you don't understand, why it's still worse.

FREYDIÈRES. You're giving my words a meaning that they don't have.

CLAIRE. You're right. I beg your pardon. Don't mind it.—I'm very foolish, I know. [*She goes near the window.*] Oh, one can breathe here. How mild it is! It was just such an evening five years ago in June that we met here.—Do you remember?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I remember.

CLAIRE. We were sitting out there on the seat near the magnolias. Madame Ernstein and De Meillan sang and kissed, each in turn; my husband was looking at some plans with Ernstein; you persuaded me, moreover, that you hadn't forgotten me; you said some things to me that were extremely sweet and your words intoxicated me. The sky was full of stars and, probably, at that moment, the little star which presides over my destiny, must have shone with a brighter light, for we must believe that all *that* had to happen and that a love-affair was inevitable. You don't believe it? Then why did Ernstein meet my husband the night before? Why did he invite us that evening? Why were you there? Why were we left alone in the dark? Why did we come to Paris? Why? Why?

FREYDIÈRES. Chance may aid the course of events, but I think that the stars have nothing to do about it and that we have also our share of responsibility in what happens to us.

CLAIRE. Oh, certainly—but, what does it matter? One must love and the rest is nothing—one must love, whether one has to suffer or die for it, like those plants that lift a

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large brilliant flower very high towards the sky and then perish from their generous act of love.

[*During these last words,* ERNSTEIN *has entered the room.*]

ERNSTEIN. Ah, you there, Freydières?—I was looking everywhere for you.—The ladies are calling for you; my wife would like to speak to you.

FREYDIÈRES. I'll go. [*He goes out.*]

ERNSTEIN. You don't like to have me tear Freydières away from you, do you?

CLAIRE. Oh, tear away——

ERNSTEIN. Besides, these ladies were not calling for him at all; it's only a pretext to have you all to myself.

CLAIRE. Very ingenious.

ERNSTEIN. You know you have had a great success—I've had many compliments for you.

CLAIRE. [*A little astonished.*] You?

ERNSTEIN. Yes, in a certain fashion—indeed, people are much interested in you.

CLAIRE. It's very good of them.

ERNSTEIN. You have a wonderful charm—that's the truth. And then you have a certain air that distinguishes you from all the others. I beg your pardon for telling you all this.

CLAIRE. There's no offense; but you exaggerate;—there are very pretty women here,—very fascinating women.

ERNSTEIN. None of these women has your peculiar attraction. I don't know what it is—or rather I do know very well what it is—those women don't love. While with you, every one knows you have a heart, a soul, a brain, feelings—that you are a true woman! Everything about you reveals love, and you radiate love as the morning sun radiates light.

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CLAIRE. You express yourself very well. You must have some favor to ask of me.

ERNSTEIN. The only thing I have to ask of you is the very thing you would refuse me. And so I ask nothing; I gave it up a long time ago; I love you with perfect disinterestedness.

CLAIRE. What is your aim in all this?

ERNSTEIN. Nothing—absolutely nothing—I need to tell you this, that's all. But it's not only for this that I have corraled you in this way. I want to speak to you about things much more serious.—Tell me—would you be inclined to marry Madeleine?

CLAIRE. Of course; but I don't intend to yet.—She's only eighteen; I should like to keep her near me one or two years longer. But I mustn't be selfish; if there should be a chance of a very good match——

ERNSTEIN. An idea has just come to me, and you know when I have an idea I don't lose any time.

CLAIRE. Well?

ERNSTEIN. There is here this evening a very intelligent young man, one of my prospectors, who has just returned from Indo-China. His name is Heybens, Paul Heybens; no parents, no fortune, but, especially if I take an interest in him, a fine future. He has one thing against him, however.

CLAIRE. What is it?

ERNSTEIN. He led his class when he left school. But you can't expect a person to be perfect in everything.—All the same he's a remarkable fellow.

CLAIRE. How old is he?

ERNSTEIN. Thirty. He's good-looking. But I'll show him to you directly and if, from what you see of him, he pleases you, I'll ask you to dinner with him next week.

CLAIRE. But you'll say nothing to him?

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ERNSTEIN. No.

CLAIRE. I'll not say anything to Madeleine either. With her ideas, a marriage simply from a mere introduction would be enough to make her wish not to hear a word about it. And you, on your side, say nothing to Monsieur Heybens, because men, in such circumstances, have a way of appearing unconcerned that betrays them. My daughter's alert, and would not be deceived by it.

ERNSTEIN. Don't fear, he shall not be told. If this marriage takes place, I'll appoint your son-in-law director of the Society of Annam Mines, with his headquarters at Paris; I'll give him a fine position. If my young friend doesn't please Madeleine, I'll send him back to Indo-China, where he will still be of great service to me. That's all there is to it. What do you think?

CLAIRE. It seems quite possible. Anyhow, you may show me your Annamite.

ERNSTEIN. Come with me, then.

[*At this moment,* MADELEINE *appears at the back on the staircase with* FREYDIÈRES, *comes down, and goes to her mother.*]

MADELEINE. Mamma, do we stay to the end?

CLAIRE. Just as you like, my dear; it all depends on you. How warm you are! You should rest a little.

MADELEINE. Yes, I'm going to chatter a little here with Freydières.

[CLAIRE *goes out of the room on the arm of* ERNSTEIN.

MADELEINE. Are you willing to keep me company and talk with me a little?

FREYDIÈRES. I'm going. I must go.

MADELEINE. How polite you are! Well, I command you to stay; you must obey me, since it appears that I am the queen of the ball.

FREYDIÈRES. That's just it: you have something better

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to do than talk with me.—Somebody will come to look for you in a minute for a dance.

MADELEINE. No, no one will come to look for me, because I have kept this waltz for you.

FREYDIÈRES. But you know I don't dance.

MADELEINE. That's all right; we're going to sit it out.

FREYDIÈRES. Only——

MADELEINE. Oh, no, no! Stay with me. Sit down there, sit down—stay with me, or I shall be very much offended. I shall think I have done something that makes you want to avoid me. First, I must scold you. It's been ages since we have seen you. You are cutting us. Why haven't you come to the house all this time?

FREYDIÈRES. I've had so much to do.

MADELEINE. Oh! [*A silence.*] Oh! how warm I am; I can't breathe. [*She goes near the window.*] It must be delightful outside.—Do you know what you would do, if you were nice?

FREYDIÈRES. No.

MADELEINE. You would offer me your arm and we should go for a walk in the garden.

FREYDIÈRES. You wouldn't think of it!

MADELEINE. I was just thinking of it. I should much rather walk with you, under the trees, this beautiful night, while all those people fuss about here.—It would seem just as if we were traveling.

FREYDIÈRES. You might take cold—and then——

MADELEINE. And then?

FREYDIÈRES. You would be ill.

MADELEINE. One follows the other.—You refuse, then?

FREYDIÈRES. Absolutely.

MADELEINE. Bah! How provoking you are! It's a shame! [*She sits down near him.*] What's the matter with

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you this evening? You don't behave as usual. Besides, you don't speak to me any more as a friend, a comrade.

FREYDIÈRES. You are no longer the little girl I knew; you're a young lady now.

MADELEINE. So much the worse—if this transformation is going to put a stop to our pleasant intimacy and make you formal. Then talk to me as to a young lady; tell me if I have a pretty gown,—if you like it. Everybody has been paying me compliments this evening; you are the only one who hasn't.

FREYDIÈRES. You are coming out this evening and you're having the greatest success. You don't need compliments from me.

MADELEINE. You don't know anything about it. Compliments from you would certainly give me the most pleasure. Then it is true—even for you who have seen me in short dresses—that I act like a young lady?

FREYDIÈRES. Quite.—You act like a young lady, as you say;—so much so, that when you first came in to-night, I didn't recognize you.

MADELEINE. Oh! I'm glad. I've had great success. Is it true that I'm so pretty as all that?

FREYDIÈRES. "As all that,"—I don't know.

MADELEINE. You don't know?

FREYDIÈRES. You wish me, willy-nilly, to compliment you?

MADELEINE. Yes, willy-nilly.

FREYDIÈRES. Well, you are more than pretty. You shed so much brightness around you, that in spite of oneself, one looks to find what it is that floods you with light—you know, like the little princess of the fairy tale; but this brightness really comes from your youth and a beauty so pure, that one must look out not to cast on it the shadow of cheap praise.

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MADELEINE. Well, you've given me more than I asked for and I'm happy to have you speak to me in this way;—it makes me very proud and I need this pride, for just now I had the humiliation of being less delicately appreciated. My partner——

FREYDIÈRES. Prabert?

MADELEINE. Yes, he paid me compliments that were rather too bold and, as I didn't say anything, naturally the fool took my silence for encouragement. He held me tighter in his arms; he persisted in looking into my corsage; and he lifted me so that my feet scarcely touched the floor; and I had to pretend that I was dizzy, and I begged him to take me to my seat.

FREYDIÈRES. [*Getting up, much irritated.*] What a blackguard!

MADELEINE. What?

FREYDIÈRES. Nothing—nothing—there's nothing you can do about it so long as you dance! I have known you for five years, and I am your friend; but if I merely took your hand differently from the way I should in saying good-morning or good-evening, it would seem strange, awful; but this evening the first-comer has the right to put his arm around you and to hold you tight. You were offended because he looked into your corsage,—but it is his right; it is his duty,—he is your partner in the dance,—it is dreadful! What familiarity, what privileges such a title permits! But, then, those who don't wish people to see what passes in their house, don't throw their windows wide open.

MADELEINE. What windows?—Oh, yes—you think I am too décolletée?

FREYDIÈRES. I—Oh! the idea! Are you crying?

MADELEINE. Yes—no—I don't know. Really I believe it's for joy.

FREYDIÈRES. [*To make up.*] You are not taking seri-

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ously what I just said. I was joking. Besides, it doesn't concern me—it's nothing to me; I'm not qualified.—Since your mother dresses you so, it is all right.—She knows better than I what is proper—or rather what suits the occasion. [*While he says the above,* MADELEINE *has put a chiffon scarf over her shoulders.*] But it's not because of what I've just said that you put this over your shoulders?

MADELEINE. Not at all; it's because I'm a little cold.

FREYDIÈRES. Just now, you were too warm.

MADELEINE. But now I'm cold, truly!

FREYDIÈRES. Madeleine, you're not angry with me?

MADELEINE. Oh, no, my good friend, I'm not angry with you; on the contrary, I'm very grateful to you; you have never spoken to me this way before. And it seems, for the first time, that you have spoken to me as a woman. Always tell me what displeases you in me, so that I may correct it.

FREYDIÈRES. But nothing can displease me in you, Madeleine, and once more, I have no right——

MADELEINE. I give it to you, alone; I assure you it will give me pleasure,—you can't know how much. Give me always this proof—of affection, will you? Besides, I sha'n't dance any more. You're right; dancing is stupid.

FREYDIÈRES. Don't do that.—I exaggerated; I've gone a little too far. Dancing is an elegant and even healthy exercise, if one doesn't carry it to excess, and a good dancer is not necessarily the despicable fellow I represented him to be just now.—Fortunately Prabert is an exception; for one can be a good dancer and an honorable man. There are certain qualities required that I don't possess.—I've never been able to dance; I'm light-headed; in my case there was even a sort of secret pique.

MADELEINE. Oh, yes, now you are joking and I have no longer any desire whatever to dance.

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FREYDIÈRES. For pity's sake, dance! Or else you will be rude to the young men to whom you've promised dances. It would be a great offense against good form, against the world.—There is nothing more exacting than the law of pleasure.

[*During these last words, a young man has come up to* MADELEINE.]

YOUNG MAN. Mademoiselle, I believe I have the honor of this waltz?

MADELEINE. Yes, Monsieur.

[*She looks questioningly at* FREYDIÈRES, *who nods his approval, and she goes away on the arm of the young man.* FREYDIÈRES *follows her with his eyes; he is unaware that for some minutes* CLAIRE, *all the while talking with* ERNSTEIN, *has been watching him and that now she is behind him.*]

CLAIRE. What a dreamer you have become all of a sudden!

FREYDIÈRES. [*Turning, surprised.*] Were you there?

CLAIRE. What were you saying to Madeleine that was so interesting? You were so much absorbed that you didn't notice I was there for five minutes with Ernstein; you spoke with such animation——

FREYDIÈRES. Your daughter didn't wish to dance any more and I told her that, at least, she must keep the engagements she had made.

CLAIRE. I should have given her the same advice. [*A silence.*] I have just had a conversation with Ernstein about a most important matter. He has a match planned for my daughter.

FREYDIÈRES. Ah!

CLAIRE. A young man who has just come back from Indo-China—a fellow with a fine future, it seems—his name is Heybens. Do you know him?

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FREYDIÈRES. It seems I know the name. Did he introduce him to you?

CLAIRE. No, he pointed him out. He seems a nice fellow—very nice, indeed. Ernstein is going to have us to dinner with him next week. But there's nothing definite yet. The chief thing is to please Madeleine. Do you know, this conversation with Ernstein has been a sudden awakening for me.

FREYDIÈRES. Awakening?

CLAIRE. Yes. Of course, I knew I had a daughter who would marry some time and that one day or other we must be separated. I have often thought of Madeleine's marrying, but it appeared so indefinite, so far away. Now, suddenly, here is the question before me. Do you understand?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I understand.

CLAIRE. I am shown a gentleman as a prospective son-in-law. I have a daughter to marry. Only a moment ago it became a definite, imminent fact. Then suddenly I understood with a singular but tardy distinctness what a very imprudent woman I have been.

FREYDIÈRES. In what way?

CLAIRE. Yes, I must expect that several suitors will present themselves for Madeleine this evening; she is making such a hit. I say it without false modesty, but she *is* dazzling. If it is not Monsieur Heybens, it will be another. The parents interested will look up the family into which the son wishes to enter and if they should learn my relations with you—only think! It's dreadful! For it would do the greatest harm to my daughter's prospects.

FREYDIÈRES. You appear upset! One would think that this idea of the possibility of our liaison being known had suddenly dawned upon you.

CLAIRE. No, but it has never appeared so menacing as

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these last minutes—so much so that I imagine it is the subject of every conversation this evening——

FREYDIÈRES. Why do you think so?

CLAIRE. Of course, there's no use discussing it; it can't be explained. It's an impression, a presentiment—you know what we women are.

FREYDIÈRES. You could never keep people from talking, seeing it's known everywhere that I am constantly received at your house in the greatest intimacy.

CLAIRE. That's just it! I have thought—it would perhaps be better for you to come to the house less frequently—that you should, little by little, make your calls farther apart—even not come at all—so that people might think there was——

FREYDIÈRES. A coolness?

CLAIRE. Yes. I didn't dare say that word. Of course, the coolness will be only pretended, for I shall continue to see you in a different way.—I shall see you always.

FREYDIÈRES. Of course; but don't be so much distressed about the matter. I'll do what you wish—as always, I shall obey you.

CLAIRE. I expressed myself badly; I beg your pardon.—I don't know how to say it.

FREYDIÈRES. That's all right; I understand you.

CLAIRE. We'll speak about it to-morrow. But let us not stay here away from the rest. Let us separate; that will be better.

FREYDIÈRES. I'll say good-by, then; I'm going.

CLAIRE. Good-by. I wish this evening were over! To-morrow?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes. [*He goes out.*]

[PRABERT *comes in by the door in the right, followed by two servants, pushing a sort of cart, upon which are arranged the favors for the cotillon.*]

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PRABERT. [*To the servants.*] Wait—put this there and then go for the baskets. Put them on the sofa and chairs.

[*The servants follow the orders of* PRABERT. MME. ERNSTEIN *comes down the stairs with* MLLE. CHOSCONESCO.]

MME. ERNSTEIN. [*Seeing* PRABERT.] Ah, Mademoiselle Chosconesco, here's your partner. [*To* PRABERT.] You are getting everything ready? You have all you need?

PRABERT. Yes, yes, thank you.

MME. ERNSTEIN. How soon will you be ready?

PRABERT. Oh, in ten minutes; in a quarter of an hour we could begin. [*To* MLLE. CHOSCONESCO.] You see, Mademoiselle, all the favors are there. We shall be near the door and they will be passed to us in order.

MLLE. CHOSCONESCO. What do we begin with?

PRABERT. With the flower arches. You have your list?

MLLE. CHOSCONESCO. Yes, yes.

PRABERT. If you please, we'll look it through together. [*Meanwhile* MME. LACORTE *has entered, followed by* HEYBENS.]

MME. LACORTE. [*Passing by* PRABERT.] How handsome you are, Prabert! You're going to lead the cotillon?

PRABERT. Yes; it's not much fun for me, I assure you.

MME. LACORTE. Nor for me, I wager. [*Followed by* HEYBENS, *she sits down.*]

HEYBENS. [*Much excited.*] Yes, it's easy to understand; put yourself in my place. I've been deprived for so long! Then this ball, this music, these lights, these flowers, these shoulders; they intoxicate me, intoxicate me; and from having talked only an hour with you who are so pretty, so witty, and who must be so good.

MME. LACORTE. Especially good!

HEYBENS. I love you; there is no other word for it. I love you with all that the word implies.

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MME. LACORTE. My compliments! You don't lose any time; you don't take a round-about way.

HEYBENS. It's never round-about.

MME. LACORTE. You are in a hurry—it might be called the return of the prospector. There are no women over there, then?

HEYBENS. There are the *congaïes*.

MME. LACORTE. What kind of animals are those?

HEYBENS. That's just what they are—animals; little, passive, uninteresting things—and they are yellow, too.

MME. LACORTE. Oh, I understand; I give you the effect of white bread after the siege.

HEYBENS. Of very white bread, if one can judge by what is seen.

MME. LACORTE. What a pretty compliment from a colonial!

HEYBENS. It's your fault; your gown—you are a trifle exposed.

MME. LACORTE. You exaggerate.

HEYBENS [*Looking into her corsage.*] You must admit that between this, and a high-necked gown, there is a great gap.

MME. LACORTE. So long as it is filled up.

HEYBENS. You fill it, and you fill us—with gratitude!

MME. LACORTE. What you must have suffered! But I always thought that in those countries you come from, love was a highly perfected art.

HEYBENS. Where have you learned that?

MME. LACORTE. In the Kama-Soutra.

HEYBENS. Oh, first the Kama-Soutra is very old and then it is in the Indies that they practice love that way. But I'm speaking of Annam and I assure you the *congaïes* are no artists.

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MME. LACORTE. I want to ask you if it is true that in that country—oh, no, I don't dare.

HEYBENS. Why, yes, dare.

MME. LACORTE. Well—oh, no, I can't.

HEYBENS. Is it, then, so terrible?

MME. LACORTE. Come nearer then—I will whisper it in your ear. [*She whispers to him behind her fan. Meanwhile* MADELEINE *with the young man who is her partner, comes into the room, and goes to her mother.*]

MADELEINE. Oh, Mamma, I was looking for you. Has Freydières gone?

CLAIRE. Yes.

MADELEINE. This gentleman has invited me for the cotillon, and I have never danced the cotillon—so I shall be very awkward.

THE YOUNG MAN. You will get through it all right. First you must learn the favors.

MADELEINE. Of course. Let's go look at them. [*Both examine the favors. Meanwhile* MME. LACORTE *has stopped whispering to* HEYBENS.]

MME. LACORTE. Oh, you are disgusting!

HEYBENS. You asked me.

MME. LACORTE. How horrible! I had been told it was so, but I would never believe it. Are you telling me the truth?

HEYBENS. The simple truth.

MME. LACORTE. You call that simple?

MADELEINE. [*To* THE YOUNG MAN.] Oh, I've forgotten my fan—I must have left it on the mantel-piece in the drawing-room.

THE YOUNG MAN. I'll bring it to you in a minute. [MADELEINE, *left alone, continues to look at the cotillon favors. She is only two steps from* MME. LACORTE *and* HEYBENS.]

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HEYBENS. [*To* MME. LACORTE *as he looks at* CLAIRE, *who is talking with* MME. ERNSTEIN.] What a lucky dog Freydières is!

MME. LACORTE. [*Who feels that* MADELEINE *is just behind her.*] Why do you say that?

HEYBENS. Because I'm looking at the person who is talking to Madame Ernstein.

MME. LACORTE. What has that to do with the question?

HEYBENS. What has it to do? Didn't you tell me just now that she is his mistress? [MADELEINE, *who has heard him, sinks upon a chair.*]

MME. LACORTE. [*With a scowl at him.*] I never said that. [*She gets up and drags* HEYBENS *away, as he insists.*]

HEYBENS. Oh, indeed, that's too much; you never said that this Madame Jadain——

MME. LACORTE. [*Taking his arm.*] Oh, hush!

[*At this moment,* THE YOUNG MAN *returns to* MADELEINE.

THE YOUNG MAN. Here's your fan. [*Seeing that* MADELEINE *has fainted, he calls.*] Prabert! Prabert! Come here!

PRABERT. Go tell her mother.—She's over there. [THE YOUNG MAN *goes to tell* CLAIRE, *who runs up to* MADELEINE. *People crowd around her.*]

HEYBENS. What's the matter with that girl?

MME. LACORTE. It's Mademoiselle Jadain—it's her daughter—*her* daughter! She heard everything.

HEYBENS. Oh, you think so?

MME. LACORTE. I'm sure of it. Oh, you're not very clever. One sees very well you have just come back from an uncivilized country.

CLAIRE. [*To* MADELEINE.] What is the matter with you? Are you ill?

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MADELEINE. Yes; let us go away; I can't stay here. I don't know what's the matter; I feel very ill.

MME. ERNSTEIN. Won't you take something, Madeleine?

MADELEINE. No, no; let us go away; there is nothing to do.

CLAIRE. But wait, my child; perhaps you will be better.

MADELEINE. No, I sha'n't be better here.

CLAIRE. But what is the matter with the child? Dear me, she is so nervous, she frightens me. Good-by, Madame Ernstein; will you excuse us?

ERNSTEIN. [*Coming up.*] What's the matter? You're not staying for the cotillon? They're just going to begin.

CLAIRE. No, Madeleine is ill. Will you be kind enough to tell my husband? [CLAIRE *and* MADELEINE *go out, accompanied by* MME. ERNSTEIN. PRABERT, MLLE. CHOSCONESCO, *and* THE YOUNG MAN *talk together about the incident.*]

HEYBENS. I'm awfully sorry.

MME. LACORTE. I felt it coming—but I scowled at you in vain—you kept on and on. When I touched your foot, didn't you understand?

HEYBENS. I didn't think it was for that.

MME. LACORTE. What a break! It makes me thirsty. Come, let's get something to drink. [*The curtain falls.*]

ACT IV

[*Two weeks later in the little drawing-room of the* JADAINS. *When the curtain rises,* CLAIRE, *who is alone, is turning over the leaves of a book. Her sister enters.*]

MME. CHENEVAS. How is Madeleine this morning?

CLAIRE. Always the same. She didn't sleep last night.

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Then about eight o'clock, I made her take the medicine the doctor ordered and finally she has dozed off.

MME. CHENEVAS. I thought the doctor ordered you, in the weak state in which Madeleine is, not to give the medicine unless it was absolutely necessary.

CLAIRE. [*With a gesture of discouragement.*] Oh, I know it; but she hasn't slept for so many nights! She doesn't eat; she doesn't sleep; that can't last very long. Oh, I'm beside myself, beside myself.

MME. CHENEVAS. Don't, Claire.

CLAIRE. If one could only know what's the matter with her; but here it's two weeks that she has been in this state.

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes, since the ball at the Ernsteins'—that makes two weeks.

CLAIRE. It's dreadful to see your child ill and not be able to help her. The doctor himself is powerless; he has examined her, sounded her lungs, auscultated her. He doesn't find anything wrong. Besides she doesn't complain of anything. She says she doesn't suffer, and yet she is wasting away.

MME. CHENEVAS. He says she has neurasthenia.

CLAIRE. That's their great word when their knowledge fails them; but one doesn't become neurasthenic in a minute; there must be symptoms—the disease must progress. She became sad suddenly—and silent, she, who was the delight of this house and radiated the joy of living. The night before, even, she ate, she slept, she sang, she laughed!

MME. CHENEVAS. She dreamed also—she has some secret grief; perhaps a sick heart for which we must seek the cause.

CLAIRE. [*With a little impatience.*] When will you stop saying that? But think how I have several times asked Madeleine, and how anxious I've been! It's of no

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use; she says nothing; she has seen how distressed I am, has seen me weeping. Once, only once, I thought she was going to speak; but, suddenly she checked herself and I detected behind that pale brow, a will, a determination to say nothing. What can there be behind that—behind that? [*She strikes her forehead.*] She says nothing more to you?

MME. CHENEVAS. No.

CLAIRE. But she has the greatest confidence in you; you are her friend.

MME. CHENEVAS. So are you.

CLAIRE. Yes, but I don't know any more what to do. Just now I was reading this medical book; I thought I should be more clear-sighted than the doctors. Oh, dear me!

MME. CHENEVAS. It's—her heart you must read.

CLAIRE. Yes,—her heart, but how?

MME. CHENEVAS. Listen. I have an idea.

CLAIRE. What?

MME. CHENEVAS. Her diary.

CLAIRE. Do you think——?

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes—that blank book her father gave her,—where she writes her thoughts, her impressions.

CLAIRE. Oh, we shall find nothing there.

MME. CHENEVAS. Who knows? Perhaps we shall get a hint.

CLAIRE. For two weeks, she has written nothing in it. Do you know where the diary is?

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes, it's in her room—in one of her bureau drawers.

CLAIRE. Well, go look for it while she is asleep. [MME. CHENEVAS *goes out;* CLAIRE *remains alone some seconds; then* ETIENNE *comes in from his study. He carries his hat, ready to go out.*]

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ETIENNE. Has she finally gone to sleep?

CLAIRE. Yes.

ETIENNE. Let's hope it will do her good. Poor child, it's distressing; I don't know any more how to exist; I have no taste for anything. In the midst of all this, I must go on with my business. Well, I'm obliged to do some errands before lunch. I'll be back at twelve, half-past twelve. By the way, I received a letter from Freydières this morning. He's going to come pretty soon to say good-by to us.

CLAIRE. Good-by? He's going away?

ETIENNE. It looks like it.

CLAIRE. Where is he going?

ETIENNE. To Tunis for that case he's told us about. He'll explain it to you. At all events, keep him till I come in, for I would like to say good-by to him. Try to have him stay to lunch.

CLAIRE. Very well.

ETIENNE. Well, good-by. [*He goes out.*]

CLAIRE. [*Left alone.*] He's going away!

[MME. CHENEVAS *enters.*

CLAIRE. You have it?

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes.

CLAIRE. She didn't wake up?

MME. CHENEVAS. No; I went so quietly.

CLAIRE. She doesn't suspect us, and we are abusing her confidence.

MME. CHENEVAS. Since she won't speak—you are her mother—you have a perfect right; in such a case all means are justifiable.

CLAIRE. You are right. But this book locks; we haven't the key. I'm afraid to open it. Well,—— [*She takes from a table near her a little metal paper knife and breaks open the clasp. She reads:*] "January 1st—I be-

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gin my diary to-day. I need to have a confidant and to put down the thoughts which, for some time, have deluded and oppressed me. I have a sort of feverish hope.

"January 4th.—He comes back to-day. This whole week without seeing him has seemed endless. It's cold; it is raining; and yet I am so full of joy that I could shout. I understand those who have faith and who, in certain countries, on Easter day, kiss each other in the streets, saying, 'Christ is risen!'

"Thursday evening.—He has been here. Alas! My poor joy is now turned to sadness. I am discouraged. He always speaks to me as if I were a child. He does not perceive anything."

MME. CHENEVAS. It's Freydières.

CLAIRE. It can't be any one else.

MME. CHENEVAS. What is the matter with you?

CLAIRE. Nothing, nothing! [*She continues to read.*] Yes, that's it; she loves him; she loves him. That's all; it's not necessary to go on—we know what to think.

MME. CHENEVAS. A young girl's love is not very serious.

CLAIRE. Her feelings are never superficial.

MME. CHENEVAS. She loves him, but that is no reason why she should be so sick as she is. There must be something else. Does *he* love her, that's the question?

CLAIRE. Yes—but leave me, please, will you?

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes.

[*She goes out;* CLAIRE *sits still several seconds, leaning on her elbow in thought. She does not hear* MADELEINE *open the door very carefully. Her daughter stands in a white tea gown, behind her, very pale.*]

MADELEINE. [*Very much annoyed.*] Ah, it's you who have my diary? Why did you take it? Why did you do that? You had no right; it's mine; it's not yours—it's wicked—what you have done.

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CLAIRE. Madeleine, Madeleine, you forget you are speaking to your mother.

MADELEINE. I am speaking to the one who has intruded upon my most intimate thoughts, who has profaned my soul.

CLAIRE. Be silent, be silent!

MADELEINE. Yes. [*She takes the book and throws it to the other end of the room.*] Oh, I have no use for it any more; I don't care for it any longer;—you may keep it. Everybody may read it now—it's all the same to me.

CLAIRE. [*Very gently, going to pick up the book.*] You are wrong, Madeleine, to be angry. I had a right to do what I did.

MADELEINE. Then why did you do it secretly? Why did you take advantage of my sleep to slip into my room and rummage in my desk and bureau? You hoped you could put the book back in its place before I should wake up and that I should not notice it; and your curiosity has been satisfied. Unfortunately, you miscalculated; I waked up in time. Besides, I dreamed that some one entered my room, and in my sleep, I saw—yes, I saw somebody take this book from me.

CLAIRE. Ah, my poor child, I did not make any such calculations, and it is not my curiosity that I wanted to satisfy, but my anxiety that I wanted to relieve. For two weeks, think, I have seen you suffering—I don't know from what; you have been extremely sad and stubbornly silent. You have withdrawn within yourself; it seems that you have lost all confidence in me and that a great gulf has opened between us.

MADELEINE. If I kept silent, it is evident that I wished to keep my secret, and if I had wished also to die with this secret, it concerned only myself. My inner life belongs to me, I suppose; and I intend to have it respected. I told you nothing and I have nothing to tell. I am no longer

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a child, and there comes an age when girls no longer show themselves all naked even to their mothers.

CLAIRE. Oh, how you misunderstand my affection! But your anger does not provoke me nor do your cruel words wound me. It's not my dear Madeleine who speaks now; it is not the child I have rocked and nourished and brought up with so much love, but a sad and feverish person; and if I wished so much to know your secret, it was only to try to assuage this grief and to cure this fever. So I used the only means within my power, since you said nothing. This means seems to you despotic and disloyal—and I grant it. Well, I beg your pardon—I beg your pardon, Madeleine.

MADELEINE. [*With a movement towards her mother.*] Oh, Mamma!

CLAIRE. And then what have I discovered that's so terrible? You're in love. Why keep it a secret? It's not a crime to love, nor a disgrace; one is not mistress of one's heart.

MADELEINE. It's not that; you are mistaken—it's not that. Then I don't love him any longer; I can't love him any longer. It's over with; it's over with forever.

[*She throws herself upon the sofa and breaks into sobs.*

CLAIRE. [*Going to her.*] Why, Madeleine, my dear, what is the matter?

MADELEINE. Oh, mother, I am so unhappy! You can't imagine what I suffer. I beg your pardon—it's not my fault—I didn't want to cry. I didn't want to say anything—but my life is ruined.

CLAIRE. At your age, how can you say that?

MADELEINE. Yes, ruined; I know very well what I'm saying. Oh, I feel so badly, so badly! It seems to me that some one crushes my bursting heart into my breast

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and then pounds on it so as to make it a poor little thing—a poor little thing all broken.

CLAIRE. But I can't let you——

MADELEINE. You can do nothing.

CLAIRE. Yes, I can hear you; I can listen to you. Now, come very near me, on my knees, as you did when you were little.

[*She takes her on her knees.*

MADELEINE. I can't say anything—especially to you.

CLAIRE. Why, to me?

MADELEINE. Because you are my mother, whom I worship.

CLAIRE. [*Speaking with precaution and groping, so to speak, like a person who is walking without a light in a dark and unfamiliar room.*] Forget, then, that I am your mother—think that we are two women and that women are all equal in the pain of loving. Now, speak; I'll help you. Why can't you love him any longer? The other evening perhaps you said something to him—I don't know—I am trying to think. Sometimes when one has a deep feeling, one betrays it in spite of oneself. And then, in the excitement of the ball, in the joy of being pretty and receiving attention, you may have said something significant—definite—that he did not understand, that he did not wish to understand.

MADELEINE. Oh, no, it's not that—just the opposite.

CLAIRE. [*As to herself.*] Just the opposite? Ah, ah! Well, then, this evening, something happened. Speak; be courageous.

MADELEINE. Oh, well—I'm going to tell you everything, because I can't keep it to myself any longer. It strangles me. Well, then—oh, no, it isn't possible! I can't!

CLAIRE. Madeleine, my child, what can it be? Please, please tell me.

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MADELEINE. Oh, well, then—it's a conversation I heard. Some people were speaking—a man and a woman I didn't know. I sat near them; they didn't know I was your daughter.

CLAIRE. Yes, yes, go on.

MADELEINE. They spoke of you and of him, and they said that you were his——

CLAIRE. It's not true! It's not true!

MADELEINE. But you haven't let me——

CLAIRE. I guess what they might say and I think I hear them. I understand now your despair and your silence and why you have spoken to me just now, not as a girl to her mother, but as a woman to her rival; no, I am not your rival! My poor child, it is true, you do not know what the world is, but a cruel moment has been sufficient for you to learn its wickedness, its thoughtlessness, and the customary tone of its conversations.

MADELEINE. But they said that about you, Mamma, about you!

CLAIRE. There is no woman who is safe from these insinuations and slanders; you will understand this later. A man and a woman are intimate, are friends; the world draws from it certain conclusions.

MADELEINE. But these people do not know you; you have done nothing to them; they are bad, then.

CLAIRE. No, perhaps they are not bad; they said that without attaching any importance to it, not knowing you were there and that what they said so lightly, would fall heavily on your heart—for you believed it.

MADELEINE. No, no! I didn't want to believe it. I mean, I don't know—I wanted to forget those horrid words, but, in spite of myself, I heard them continually; they rang in my ears. It was the downfall of my fondest ideal in you,

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and in him of my sweetest dream. Oh, those words! I should have heard them always or rather I should have died of them! Yes, died!

CLAIRE. Don't say that.

MADELEINE. Only an hour ago, I assure you, I didn't care much for life. I remember that evening I was so happy; I had just been talking with him, and for the first time I was sure he loved me.

CLAIRE. How?

MADELEINE. Oh, he didn't tell me he did! He is far too considerate for that; but you know, we women are not deceived in such a matter—we feel those things, and then—imagine it—we had a little quarrel and I saw it was because he was jealous of a fool with whom I danced, a certain Prabert—Prabert, just think of it! The dear! He controlled himself at once, of course. All the same, he was angry—and I was so glad—and there, a few minutes after, those people had to—oh, it's dreadful! Then I understood his reserve with me, his coldness for some time previously, and why he no longer came to the house so often, as if he wished to avoid me, to shun me—and then the thought, especially that such a thing was the obstacle to my happiness.

CLAIRE. But you don't believe it now any longer?

MADELEINE. No, I don't believe it any longer.

CLAIRE. Ah, you don't say that with conviction.

MADELEINE. No, it's not true; it's not true! You assure me on your word—you swear it?

CLAIRE. Yes, I swear it.

MADELEINE. On my life?

CLAIRE. Yes, on your—[*she checks herself and says*]—on your happiness, for, you see, life without happiness is nothing—on your happiness——

MADELEINE. But my happiness is to be his wife!

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CLAIRE. Since you love him and he loves you, you shall be his wife. Do you believe me now?

MADELEINE. Oh, yes, Mamma! I beg your pardon. Ah, if you knew what a weight has been removed. I can breathe now; I can live again; I am going to be well; I feel it, I promise you. You shall not be sad any more on my account. I'll not make you cry again.

[*At this moment a maid comes in.*

MARIE. Madame, Monsieur Freydières wishes to speak with you.

CLAIRE. Tell Madame Chenevas to come here. Have Monsieur Freydières come in when I ring.

MARIE. Very well, Madame.

[*She goes out.*

MADELEINE. It's he; it's he! I don't want to see him;—I'm going away. What are you going to say to him? Be sure to question him very carefully. Don't seem to be throwing me at his head. Well, I trust myself to you. My happiness is in your hands.

CLAIRE. You may entrust it to me; it will be safe.

[MME. CHENEVAS *enters.*

MME. CHENEVAS. You wanted me?

CLAIRE. Yes, Freydières is here. I want to speak to him; take Madeleine away and stay with her.

MME. CHENEVAS. Yes.

[*She goes out with* MADELEINE; CLAIRE *remains alone, a prey to what thoughts can be imagined; then she rings. The maid shows* FREYDIÈRES *in.*]

FREYDIÈRES. Good-morning, Claire; how are you?

CLAIRE. Not very well, as you can imagine.

FREYDIÈRES. How is Madeleine this morning?

CLAIRE. Better, thank you; at least I hope she is going to be better. Ah, I have spent two wretched weeks. I have thought a good deal and I must speak to you very seri-

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ously. [*She motions him to sit down.*] For some time, life has been very sad around me and in the midst of so many anxieties of all sorts, I have found out—I have come to feel that I ought not to love you any more as I have in the past. Oh, I shall always feel for you, don't doubt it, a great affection; but I want to ask you whether we can't both agree to change our love, which has so much torture and remorse and perhaps disaster, into a faithful, devoted friendship, full of calm security—that doesn't mean that we must *forget*. Does such a request from me surprise you?

FREYDIÈRES. I must admit it does. But why such a change?

CLAIRE. I am no longer the woman you have known. So far I have always believed that love was everything. I have been imprudent, jealous, sensual, exclusive, passionate, but, you see, there are other things also. I have realized it fully to-day; all that was needed to have my feelings towards you change was that Madeleine should fall ill and that I should feel myself being punished in her. Jacques, for five years you have been my only reason for living; you will remain, whatever may happen, the only one whom I have ever loved.

FREYDIÈRES. My dear Claire!

CLAIRE. Besides, it seems that you are going away.

FREYDIÈRES. Yes.

CLAIRE. It was only a moment ago and from Etienne that I learned this news.

FREYDIÈRES. Don't be offended; during these last days, I could not speak to you about it, in the midst of your anxieties. Besides, the date of my leaving was not definitely decided; but now I leave Paris day after to-morrow.

CLAIRE. Yes, you are going away because you do not love me any more.

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FREYDIÈRES. Claire, why do you say that?

CLAIRE. Because, anticipating your pity, I wanted to help you in your weakness. For a long time I have felt you were growing away from me and I have spoken first so as to make the disagreeable task of speaking to me easier for you. Don't spare me then. Be frank and brave. But you are crying?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I am crying—for you, and for the pain I am giving you—for I've not been deceived by your generous ruse.

CLAIRE. No, you've not been deceived; but you've not protested; you've not cried out against it. Then cry—your tears are an avowal. You don't love me any longer; it is not your fault. I bear you no ill-will. On the contrary, I pity you, for you are unhappy. A tragedy is taking place in your heart, for you not only do not love me any more but you love someone else.

FREYDIÈRES. I swear to you——

CLAIRE. You love someone else: my daughter.

FREYDIÈRES. No, Claire, you are mistaken.

CLAIRE. Ah, so much the worse; for she loves you and what is more serious, she has reason to believe that you love her.

FREYDIÈRES. I have never told her so.

CLAIRE. Ah, you see! Well, that is what I want to know. It is horrible what you have just said; there is no name for it. I understand that you have had enough of me. At the end of five years I have ceased to please you. Five years! That's pretty long and I can't complain. I have given you all my heart and all my body; you don't wish them any longer; so be it! I understand that you are tired of adultery and of its complications, its deceits, and its restraints. I understand that you want a lover who is free. I remember also that you are reach-

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ing an age when a man feels the need of having a home of his own. I should have understood that you would leave me to marry; that you would choose a girl; that is natural—but not my daughter. Oh, no, not her! She should have been sacred to you above all else; you should not have even so much as thought of her—and yet you did think of her.

FREYDIÈRES. You are mistaken, Claire. But what design do you attribute to me then? You speak to me as if I were to blame for what has happened, but I don't know how this feeling was born in me—truly, I don't know. But think how I have seen her constantly; to live continually with her has been a dangerous test. I have fallen in love, in spite of myself—yes, in spite of myself—by that mysterious charm of the young girl which, in the case of Madeleine, is overpowering because it comes from innocence itself. And then one does not realize; one does not think so sweet a perfume will intoxicate, but it does intoxicate, and one is completely permeated with it. I didn't understand what was taking place in me. What I'm telling you now I did not formulate even to myself. Besides, it has not been such a long time since I thought of her as a child, as a little girl I had known—and it was only the day when I saw the confusion she experienced near me, that I understood the nature of the charm I felt near her—and her love has revealed mine to me. Then I wished to go away. I didn't want to come to this house any more. Remember, you were the first to be alarmed at my absence. There was then no premeditation on my part nor treason towards you. I have not made her love me. I have never spoken one word of love to her. I neither defend nor accuse myself. I am simply explaining to you, sincerely.

CLAIRE. Cruelly.

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FREYDIÈRES. It's the same thing. I am explaining to you what has taken place in me,—and you ought to believe me. Claire, I beg you to believe me. The proof is, that I have decided not to see her any more.

CLAIRE. I believe you—I believe you. But it is none the less horrible for me. Only think!—you two!—you two! And I can say nothing. It is you—you—who plunge the knife into my heart; and my daughter who stops my mouth so that I cannot cry out. You two will murder me. [*She breaks into sobs.*]

FREYDIÈRES. Claire, listen to me.

CLAIRE. [*In tears.*] Oh, let me alone!—let me alone! Don't say anything more. I had resolved to be more courageous, but it's too much for me. I don't blame you, even. I'm not jealous of my daughter, am I?—I did wrong to have you become so intimate in the family. I should have foreseen that one day Madeleine would be eighteen; but one never thinks of that other danger—that you would find again in her—they say she resembles me—your first and early love for me. Oh, don't protest; it's all the same to me now! I don't care for anything any more. One hour like this makes one grow twenty years older. I shall be more than old; I shall survive myself. But it's no longer a question of me. It's a question of my daughter. What are you going to do?

FREYDIÈRES. I have told you; I am going away, and I shall not see her again.

CLAIRE. I can't tell Madeleine that.

FREYDIÈRES. You have nothing to tell her.

CLAIRE. She knows you are here, and after the explanation I have just had with her——

FREYDIÈRES. The explanation?

CLAIRE. I have just learned from her, herself, why she was upset the other evening, at the Ernsteins'. She has con-

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fessed to me that that evening she overheard a conversation which revealed our liaison. Do you understand?

FREYDIÈRES. Oh! And then?

CLAIRE. I declared it wasn't true. I took my oath upon her life—upon her happiness—and I did not hesitate to take such an oath, I assure you.

FREYDIÈRES. You did right—quite right.

CLAIRE. I did right, didn't I?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes.

CLAIRE. I went further, so that in spite of the oath there shouldn't remain the slightest doubt, since you both love each other. I told her that she should be your wife.

FREYDIÈRES. What! You would have me marry Madeleine? Claire, don't think of it—it's impossible. I don't want to—I can't. And it is you who propose such a thing to me? But you certainly have not thought it over. You certainly have not considered the dreadful situation such a solution would put us in.

CLAIRE. I'm not concerned about *us*, but about Madeleine. She will not know—that is the essential thing.

FREYDIÈRES. But suppose, later, she should learn the truth? She would have the right to blame us for having built her happiness upon a deception.

CLAIRE. Upon a sacrifice.

FREYDIÈRES. Your sacrifice blinds you too much to the nature of the resolution you have taken.

CLAIRE. But when a woman has a man by her side who can defend her, there are certain things that people don't come to tell her. The world is not brave.

FREYDIÈRES. Ah! since you speak of it, how will the world judge us? It will say that you have shamelessly given your lover to your daughter, and it will blame us for making such a union.

CLAIRE. The world will not save my daughter. Then

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it's of no account what it will say. I have sworn to Madeleine that I have not been your mistress. I have promised her that she shall be your wife. We are bound by my promise.

FREYDIÈRES. You are—not I.

CLAIRE. We are both alike bound.

FREYDIÈRES. Listen to me, Claire; a thing like this is impossible. We are discussing it like two enemies—two adversaries. It is dreadful. Now, let us unite. Let us work together. We must give reasons to Madeleine. Yes, it is true our love founders hopelessly in such frightful circumstances, but we ought to remain friends—two tender, sorrowful friends. I have loved you, Claire; I have loved you. I am tortured myself, and I suffer. I am crying—I feel all the heartrending anguish of the separation. But, at least, let us not make a bride's bouquet out of the funeral wreath. Ah! believe me, your sacrifice is useless; it is not Madeleine's happiness you have decided.

CLAIRE. Why?

FREYDIÈRES. Because happiness is more exacting; because, admitting, even, that she would never know anything, and that her confidence in you has dispelled all her doubts, you would always be, virtually, mysteriously near us—between us; her woman's instinct would divine your wandering presence, and her filial heart would break with anguish. No, I'm perfectly sure we should not be happy.

CLAIRE. Oh, don't say that! At that time, I was near you—between you—and yet you loved each other. But if this door should open now, and Madeleine should come in, the brightness of a beautiful day would come in with her; you would no longer peer into the gloomy past, and happiness would appear to you certain and desirable.

FREYDIÈRES. I know nothing about it. Perhaps it is true. Everything is possible; but I don't want even to think

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of it; I don't want to live, knowing you are buried alive. No, no, Claire; listen to me! I am ready to do anything. I shall go away forever; I shall disappear, if it is necessary. I shall begin life again, somewhere else, no matter where; but for Madeleine it would be as if I were dead.

CLAIRE. Then she will say, "It was true, then!"

FREYDIÈRES. Why, no. Tell her she was mistaken—that I do not love her; for I have never said anything that would lead her to believe——

CLAIRE. Your way of acting with her has shown it, and your fit of jealousy the other evening broke out before penetrating eyes. Well, *there* you should have been a better master of yourself.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, why have I known Madeleine? Ah, yes, you did wrong to draw me to your house, and I did wrong not to resist. Then your daughter has grown up near us, in the subtle influence of our love—in the contagious atmosphere of our guilty love; and, from compromise to compromise, we have come to-day to discuss—to dare to discuss—an infamy—a veritable crime.

CLAIRE. How many a secret tragedy takes place around us, and we are ignorant of the silent dénouement——

FREYDIÈRES. And false——

CLAIRE. And painful——

FREYDIÈRES. The pain is no excuse.

CLAIRE. My excuse is that for two weeks I have witnessed the agony of my child, and there is only one way to save her.

FREYDIÈRES. You are possessed now with the idea that your daughter might die, and this idea hides everything else; but she is eighteen years old.—Eighteen! That is to say, a whole lifetime is before her in which to forget,—and she will forget.

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CLAIRE. And if she shouldn't be one of those who forget,—should there be only one chance of her dying of it,—it is this one chance that we must avert.

FREYDIÈRES. Oh, you'd better have told her the truth!

CLAIRE. It's only in novels that one tells the truth. But, in life, when chance discovers it, one tries to cover it up in order not to provoke some irreparable misfortune.

FREYDIÈRES. The truth is far better, however, with all its consequences, than such an anomalous situation as ours.

CLAIRE. You would, then, prefer to have me tell Madeleine the truth?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes—a hundred times rather!

CLAIRE. Ah! you would not speak that way if you had seen her; if, like me, you had held in your arms a miserable child, white and trembling; if, like me, you had read in her anxious eyes the terror of my fault and the shame of her besmirched love! You would understand how I have not had the courage—the barbarity—to tell her the cruel truth. Yes, I have promised her everything; I have pledged my sacred word, because, above and beyond the truth, there is her purity—her tender youth; because, above everything, there is pity. And since you speak of crime, the real crime would have been to smite, perhaps fatally, an innocent child—do you understand, *innocent?* If you don't think so, tell Madeleine yourself your resolution; tell her you are going away, and that you will not return. If you have decided that that is your duty, assume all the responsibility of it with her, and spare me, at least, the torture of a new explanation with my child. Besides, I could not—I have no more strength. I am going to have her called, and you will speak to her. [*She rings the bell.*]

FREYDIÈRES. Do you realize what you are doing, Claire?

CLAIRE. I most certainly do.

[*The maid comes in.*

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MARIE. Did Madame ring?

CLAIRE. Tell Mademoiselle to come, please.

MARIE. Very well, Madame. [*She goes out.*]

FREYDIÈRES. How do you want me to tell her?

CLAIRE. I don't know. You will probably find reasons that I was unable to.

MADELEINE. [*Entering.*] You want to see me, Mamma?

CLAIRE. Yes, my dear; Monsieur Freydières would like to speak to you.

MADELEINE. [*Smiling.*] Ah! [*Then, seeing the confusion of* FREYDIÈRES.] How you look at me! Do you find me changed? I have been very sick, you know—very sick.

FREYDIÈRES. I see it very well.

MADELEINE. But you frighten me! You don't seem to recognize me. Have I changed, then, so much as that? Ah! I can't be very pretty, and I am not a coquette, to appear with such a face. But you want to speak to me?

FREYDIÈRES. [*With a great effort.*] Yes; I have come to say farewell.

MADELEINE. [*Very much moved.*] Farewell? You are going away?

FREYDIÈRES. Yes, I am going away.

MADELEINE. Why do you say farewell to me, and not just good-by? You are going away forever? I sha'n't see you any more—not any more at all? [*Her eyes fill with tears; she is on the point of falling.*]

FREYDIÈRES. [*Springing towards her.*] No, no, Madeleine, I shall come back—I shall come back! I'm obliged to go away. When I made this decision, your mother had not yet spoken to me. I didn't know, then, your feelings; but if they have not changed—on my return——

MADELEINE. Here is my hand, my dear friend. Whatever may happen, my feelings will never change. [*She*

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throws herself into her mother's arms; then, very much embarrassed, she says:] I left Aunt Alice very anxious. I promised to reassure her. I'll go to find her. [*She goes out.*]

FREYDIÈRES. You were right:—it is only in novels that people tell the truth. When I saw this child— But what is going to become of you?

CLAIRE. Life is over for me; it goes on for you. You will forget, and I shall be resigned.

FREYDIÈRES. Nevertheless, our shares are not equal.

CLAIRE. You know very well that in love it is always the woman who pays the penalty.

FREYDIÈRES. I reverence you.

CLAIRE. I'm a most unhappy woman. [*She cries in silence, while the curtain falls.*]

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